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Bodies Across Borders: Embodiment and Experiences of Migration for Southern African  
International Students at the University of Cape Town

Tessa Moll MLLTES005

A dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of  
Master of Social Science in Gender Studies

Faculty of the Humanities

University of Cape Town

2010

**COMPULSORY DECLARATION**

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed by candidate

Date: 8-12-2010

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Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Abstract

In context of increasing global migration and its correlation to heightened tensions around the meaning of a “foreign” body, this research questions the experiences of bodies crossing borders into the social and historical space of Cape Town, South Africa. Grounded in theories of surveillance, embodiment, and feminist geography of fear of crime, the study employed a feminist methodology using qualitative group interviews with international students from the Southern African Development Community at the University of Cape Town. The transcribed data was analysed through the participants use of discourses and their descriptions of experiences. Questions arose around the meaning of surveillance and notions of respectability in transition. Furthermore, participants navigate amid new spaces of fear and insecurity in relation to their subjectivities, particularly as “foreigners”. The research suggests that fear becomes a fundamental attribute of bodies in migration through which individuals mitigate, through “passing”, subverting expressions of embodied nationalities, knowledge gathering of the local terrain, among others. The challenges and techniques to overcome these fears become part of a process to re-establish the “self” in a foreign context.

Key words: embodiment, migration, bodies, foreign, surveillance, South Africa, fear

## 1. Introduction

The question of bodies within feminist research is admittedly not new (see, Diprose, 1994; Shildrick and Price, 1999; Day, 2001; Saugeres, 2002; Young, 2005; Horn, 2006). However, social scientists have only recently begun to place the question of bodies within terrains of migration and transition (Parrini, 2007). Bodies take salience under particular social and historical contexts and through their relations to stratified power within a system interacting with other bodies. As these meanings, expectations, and notions of “respectable” bodies and performances pivot within specific contexts, the question posed here is simply, “What happens when these contexts change?”

Contexts - and the meanings within them – may be as small or as large as the frame applied, as power interacts between two bodies to the relations on a global scale. From the micro-level power relations of an intimate relationship to the surveillance and legal dominions of power within a nation-state, bodies cross through multiple boundaries and borders. I chose to select the boundary and relations of power experienced in the crossing of national borders – from Southern African countries to South Africa.

Silvey (2006) analyses the study of geography and gender in social research; she argues that previous studies that examined mobility through international borders excluded women’s mobility. Such studies reproduced “gender productions of a hierarchy of scales” (2006: 67) in coding international borders as “masculine” and demeaning the borders of households as “feminine” domains.

However, within South Africa and, what Saunders (2003) describes as, the recent rise of invocations of the “foreign” in contexts of growing nationalism and debates of citizenship, the boundaries of the nation-state provide an opportunity to examine the meaning of a “foreign” body in transition through multiple intersections of power. Through national immigration policies, heightened security concerns, and embedded antagonism toward foreigners, “the nation is clearly one of the most authoritative formulators of the meaning of foreignness” (Saunders, 2003: 5). This experience of what



it means to embody “the foreign” within the context of South Africa is at the heart of this research study. In light of this increasingly insecure subjective position and its relevance to a growing global migration of bodies, how individuals experience transition through the vehicle, their body in which the geographic move takes place, becomes particularly salient.

Drawing from theoretical questions of the “body” in social research and the contexts through which the participants engage, this study will focus on the experiences of international students at the University of Cape Town who claim their country of origin from the Southern African Development Community. Nearly a fifth of students at the University of Cape Town are “international” – a point of prestige for the university that is among the top 200 in the world (IAPO, 2010). As these students begin their studies, how do they experience not only the transition from secondary school to the university space, but their bodies crossing borders? In moving to South Africa for higher education, international students at UCT may endure a precarious new relationship to this space as it pertains to their bodies. How do they experience this transition, and, in doing so, how do they embody the differences in discourses and relations of power, negotiate through possibly hostile spaces, and conceptualise the meaning of this new location?

Through qualitative group interviews, I will present these findings with the following aims in mind:

- Analyse and present the experiences of bodies as they cross borders, focusing on the ways in which participants embody this transition.
- Conduct a gender analysis on these experiences, which includes exposing the constructedness of the categories that stratify power and engender oppression.
- Illuminate the under-researched voices of African students in migration, highlighting their agency as subjects.
- Engage with this question by employing a feminist methodology.

My first chapter will outline an analytical framework through which I will engage with this research question and the results. I will examine the theories of gender and

embodiment; the major works of Michel Foucault (1977, 1978) on techniques of discipline, systems of power, and the regulations of bodies; and the interdisciplinary research on gender and the spatialisation of fear of crime. Finally, I will include information on the context of South Africa itself as it pertains to migration, fear, and crime.

The third chapter will present my engagement with feminist theories of social research, presenting the major arguments for positionality and reflecting on my own position within this process and practice. Within this section, I will explain the selection of focus groups, or group interviews, engagements with the participants, and how the participants came into the research space. Next, I will describe how the group interviews were conducted in consideration with my research ethics and goals; and, finally, how I transcribed, coded, and analysed the data in reflection of the discourses employed and the bodily experiences described.

The next three chapters will present the predominant findings and results of this study. These are entitled Feeling 'Free', Discourses of (In)Security, and Language and Foreign Bodies. The themes coalesce under an examination of how transition is embodied through experiences of corporeal regulations

Finally, I will conclude by pointing to correlations and contradictions of previous literature to this research and its results. I will ensure an adherence to the goals of feminist research through an examination of my own position within the findings and the process of this study. In conclusion, I will consider the findings through questions of the larger debates and aims of feminism.

## 2. Literature Review

This section will consider the major theoretical frames, and some pertinent research and studies within them, through which I will engage with this research question.

### 2.1. Embodiment

Csordas recounts how earlier academic interest in the body examined it as a “fixed, material entity subject to the empirical rules of biological science” (1994: 1). In scholarly thought, this body was unchangeable, existing prior to cultural and ideological impressions. However, following Foucault’s work, predominantly in the *History of Sexuality* (1978), Csordas concludes, “the new body that has begun to be identified can no longer be considered as a brute fact of nature” (1994: 1). Instead, this body becomes a representation of a particular historical space. While there is no natural, normal body, hegemonic discourses perpetuate the notion that bodies are fixed with essential and universal characteristics (1994: 2). The new body is fluid, embodied within a particular location and within its relation to other bodies. Removed from stasis and biological determinism, the new body becomes an agent rather than object (1994: 3).

Research in embodiment should remember to avoid “objectifying bodies as things devoid of intentionality and intersubjectivity” (Csordas, 1994: 4). Bodies are not mere objects without personhood or devoid of ideological impositions from outside forces. Csordas (1994: 4) argues that new research should move beyond presenting the body as a mere symbol for a culture. As an example of this old paradigm, he cites Marcel Mauss’s (1950) “techniques of the body” - such as swimming, breathing, eating, and standing - that vary across cultures and historical locations. Csordas proposes that new investigations into embodiment must not take the body for granted, but use it “as a valuable starting point for rethinking the nature of culture and our existential situations as cultural beings” (1994: 6). Instead of using a culture to examine the body, the body can be used to examine a culture, as marked through its active negotiations of that culture.

Research concerned with embodiment also serves to problematise dualities – the pre-objective and objectified bodies; mind and body; culture and biology; mental and material; culture and reason; gender and sex (Csordas, 1994: 7). These binaries are not separate as commonly imagined (whereas one also adopts a higher value), but interwoven through highly complex relationships and exchanges.

Csordas then describes the duality of representation and subjectivity, semiology and phenomenology, whereas semiology examines language and representations of culture, phenomenology studies the actual lived experiences of that culture. Correspondingly, social sciences tend to examine the body as a pre-cultural site, where that culture inscribes upon that body: “In such accounts the body is a creature of representation, as in the work of Foucault, whose primary concern is to establish the discursive conditions of possibility for the body as an object of domination” (1994: 12). Instead, in using embodiment as a theoretical framework, the concern is the body and its lived experiences of that culture and historical location. This is where embodiment creates a methodological space for studying agency of subjects. Thus, he defines embodiment as “an indeterminate methodological field defined by perceptual experience and mode of presence and engagement in the world” (ibid).

While Csordas does not directly implicate gender in his theory, Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (1990) applies the ideas of embodiment to her deconstruction of feminist subjects. Although conceived with good intentions (to revoke the belief of a biological determinism), Butler (1990: 9) finds the sex/gender distinction severely problematic when examined. The distinction presupposes a fixed and given sex and the cultural inscription of gender following the sexed body. Thus, sex is seen as “prediscursive” (1990: 10). As a result, “The body appears as a passive medium on which cultural meanings are inscribed or as the instrument through which an appropriative and interpretive will determines a cultural meaning for itself” (1990: 12); the body remains an object within the sex/gender distinction. Instead, Butler applies an embodied perspective to the question of gender: “To what extent does the body come into being in and through the mark(s) of gender?” (ibid.).

In examining the embodied gender of subjects, Butler (1990) considers Simone de Beauvoir's call for women's inclusion as an existential subject. A paradox seemingly arises: If women become disembodied existential subjects, they are appealing to the Cartesian philosophy, which Butler describes as masculinist (1990: 17). Historically, women were viewed as closer to their bodies, which were unruly and disruptive to knowledge (Shildrick and Price, 1999: 2). Men, as existential subjects, encompassed a disembodied existence, "a denial of corporeality and the corresponding elevation of mind or spirit... to access the pure Intelligible as the highest form of Being" (ibid.).

Butler moves from questioning the subject of political action and unity among feminist activists (a unified category of "women") to compulsory heterosexuality. However, most significant to my research questions is her concluding definition of gender. Rather than as a fixed noun (as in the subject) or an adjective (a descriptive attribute to a pre-gendered subject), gender is a verb: "There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (1990: 34). As such, gender is an embodied phenomenon, a performative act moving not from a fixed sex, but from the cyclical reinforcement from that discursive performance. The performance, conducted within a "highly rigid regulatory frame" (Butler, 1990: 45), conceals itself so to produce the appearance of a natural substance, the sexed body as male or female.

In regards to my own research, I believe embodiment within changing spaces, and perceptions and meanings of those locations, will reflect an aspect of that gendered performance. Echoing Butler's assertions that the performance conceals itself, I also believe that many research participants will recount how their embodiment of those spaces reflects their respective "natural" sexed bodies; for example, their discourses of fear, violence, and crime may reflect a "frailer" female body and a "stronger" male body.

Diprose (1994) considers embodiment through the perception of sexual differences, ethics, and the injustice that women experience as a result. She contends that "modes of

production and maintenance of sexual difference” (1994: viii) reinforce the oppression of women. These “sets of habits” (Diprose, 1994: 18) illuminate how gender is embodied in a specific “location, position and place” (ibid.). As such, our social identities, those perceived through our bodies and repeated acts and habits, are constituted within a specific social context. Complementary to Butler, Diprose searches for a chance for agency beyond the normalising operations of gender practices. She argues that a social identity is constructed through “differential relations to others”; the reconstruction of bodily practices and changing of habits offers a space for individual agency within a patriarchal context (1994: 35).

What these two writers examine is the interwoven influence of space, agency, and gender, themes I will further explore to address my own research questions and examine the embodiment of gender within changing contexts. In being pulled into a highly insecure space – insecure in the regard that it is unfamiliar, often considered “dangerous”, and without the support of old friends and family members – I wish to highlight the participants’ agency in the manner they negotiate these changing contexts in order to survive and even thrive at UCT and Cape Town.

Saugeres (2002) examines discursive tactics of gendered embodiment and how they are used to “reproduce and legitimate unequal gender relations” (2002: 641). In a small farming community in France, Saugeres’s study examines how bodies are gendered through farming practices and resulting discourses from the community itself that reflect the embodiment of sex differences. The study illuminates how gendered discourses essentialise bodies; inequality between gender relations is normalised through discourse and the habituated practices of the farming community. The farmers and their families embody those gender differences in the work they perform on the farm and the value placed on those duties. As such, farmwomen take “easier” work because they feel they are physically weaker than the men (Saugeres, 2002: 646). The men’s work is viewed as central to farming, whereas women’s work is perceived as menial and auxiliary to the primary functions of the business. Saugeres credits the perceptions of women’s “frail physiologies associated with reproductive biologies” (2002: 646) to their secondary roles

within farming life. She analysis her data, gathered through qualitative interviews, through the discourses employed and the behaviour described by the participants. I intend to enact a similar method of data analysis to examine how participants embody – performances reinforced through discourse – their transition.

Within essentialising discourses of gender, men are perceived as strong, dominant farmers and essential to the operation, while women's bodies are weak, frail, and therefore unable to carry out certain important tasks. Again, these assertions are enacted through the behaviour of bodies (their experiences in farming) and reinforced through discourses (how they discuss their practices).

These ideologies, I believe, will be similarly reflected in the discourses of students as they describe feelings of vulnerability and security in South Africa. I estimate that while men's bodies are seen as strong and able to protect, women's bodies are vulnerable to threats and attacks. These hegemonic and normalising ideologies are believed to be universal for all bodies. As such, those bodies that defy this ideology are subject to scrutiny and distrust. Saugeres's study reflects those consequences in examinations of the female-run farming operations within the community. She found that most male farmers were dismissive of the female head farmers; many of the men characterized the women in masculine terms, ridiculing their lack of sexual attractiveness (2002: 647-8). Saugeres concludes that the discursive constructions of bodies are central to the reproduction of patriarchal ideology and unequal gender relations in farming families. Bodies that transgress those spheres, the female farmers who run their own operations, "are even more marginalised and desexed as they are excluded from both the realms of the feminine and the masculine" (2002: 649).

Hollander's (2001) study supports a similar conclusion: Bodies gendered as female were inscribed with certain ideologies such as vulnerability and fear, while male gendered bodies were perceived as strong and protecting to the weak women (2001: 87). Dominant gender ideologies normalise these beliefs as innate and inarguable qualities of sexed bodies (ibid.). These daily interactions with gendered bodies and "vulnerable" bodies

provide a space for the regulated performance of gender, as described by Butler (1990: 45). These discourses reflect embodied ideologies performed in a highly regulated narrative between different bodies and different spaces.

Young (2005), in her collection of essays *On Female Body Experience*, questions the relation between individual agency and discursive construction of the embodied subject. In considering a “lived body”, the subject’s experiences relate to the materiality of the body in relation to the specific socio-cultural context (Young, 2005: 16). In this regard, my participants experience their own bodies, the bodies of “foreigners”, “students”, “women”, “black”, subjectivities both adopted and foisted upon them, within relation to the context of South African and the micro politics engaged in their everyday lives in relation to other bodies. As such, “Contexts of discourse and interaction position persons within systems of evaluation and expectations which often implicate their embodied being” (Young, 2005: 17). The subjectivities and their positioning within a specific context or interaction are latent with values, judgment, norms, and deviations of such. However, these are not simply “docile bodies,” as Foucault (1977) earlier contended. There is agency to adopt certain subjectivities, the freedom to construct the self within a hierarchy of discourses. A subject reacts in relation to the context in which they are conditioned (being expectations, society, and culture) (Young, 2005: 18). These contexts and discourses that “enculture” bodies “contribute to the suffering of some men and women who fall on the wrong side of normalising processes” (2005: 19). Through these processes on the body, certain bodies are denied status, access to resources, access to notions of respectability, and limited relations to power in such social structures.

The theories of embodiment and gender will couch my research in considering how the transition of discourses influences perceptions and reactions to the meaning of South Africa and participants’ relation to the space. In experiencing changing discourses, I expect that participants will experience a changing relationship to their embodiment as they may suddenly be foisted into new subjectivities, such as the position as a “foreign body”, within the South African context.



This first section explored scholarship in the ways in which ideologies are inscribed onto bodies and how discourses also reflect an embodied position. The next section will explore Foucault's theories of how the normalising gaze creates social control through power and its effects on the subject.

## 2.2 Foucault, Power, and Body Regulation

This section will explore the main theories of Michel Foucault, predominantly in the works *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977) and *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction* (1978). Following an explanation of the pertinent theories, I will review several feminist criticisms of his works. My interest in Foucault's theories lies in his ideas about bodies as the site of discursive power relations. As these discourses are contextually based, I am interested in how participants experience this transition, not only in the discourses of the new space, but the relations of power employed through them.

In *Discipline and Punish* (1977), Foucault's primary focuses are systems of punishment and surveillance within institutions (mental, hospital, and particularly penal) and to larger social structures. In his first section, Foucault notes the disappearance of public torture as spectacle prior to the institutional transformation of prison systems in Europe, particularly France. With the end of violent public torture, "the body as the major target of penal repression disappeared" (1977: 8). Instead, a system of "suspended rights" (1977: 11) took its place. This transition could only have happened in the Enlightenment era and in conjunction with the newly conceived notion of human rights to liberty and freedom; corresponding also to Cartesian theories of the mind/body duality. As such, punishment transitioned to taking these rights away. The body becomes an intermediary of punishment; "If one intervenes upon it to imprison it, or to make it work, it is in order to deprive the individual of a liberty that is regarded both as a right and as property" (1977: 11). Punishment is meted out on this (disembodied) Cartesian subject.

As punishment changes, so does the form of social surveillance. Although Foucault's

primary analysis concerns specific institutions, his theories have commonly been applied to larger social structures, a scope he alludes to when claiming that the formation of a disciplinary society developed through economic, juridical-political and scientific developments and knowledges (1977: 218). Through the details of technique, Foucault illustrates the “microphysics” of power on the body, including the entire “social body” (1977: 139). Techniques of discipline, he describes, include the hierarchised, individuation of space, minute regulation of activity, observation, normalising judgements, and the examination. I will expand on several techniques that I believe are relevant to this research.

Observation is crucial to discipline. The objects of power must always believe themselves to be watched and judged based on that observation; this surveillance transforms those being watched, causing them to monitor their own behaviour and conduct, and to “carry the effects of power right to them, to make it possible to know them, to alter them” (1977: 172). This technique, he charts, became integrated into schools, hospitals, and factories, in which hall monitors, attendants, and supervisors appraise. He emphasises that although there is a “head” to this system – the observer – the system itself disseminates power onto subjects. However, the “head”, the observer, the source of this gaze, is undeniably sustaining power relations, affording him or her authority.

Normalising judgments, another technique, bring subjects “into line.” This disciplinary exercise corrects infractions and operates in a cyclical fashion so that the corrected individual in turn corrects another; “Each subject finds himself caught in a punishable, punishing universality” (1977: 178). Here, Foucault theorises the normalising gaze that punishes deviance. Through punishment and reward, behaviours are defined along a binary continuum of “good” and “evil” (1977: 180). Again, this technique of discipline hierarchizes along this continuum, penalising those further away from the pole of “good”, exercising “a constant pressure to conform to the same model, so that ... they might all be like one another” (1977: 182). Through the previously described all-seeing gaze, subjects and their behaviour are constantly under scrutiny for any variation from an ideal.

Normalising judgments impose social control through a system of rewards and

punishments, curtailing any deviation from this “norm”. Subjects are meant to conform; rebelling results in social punishment.

Several feminist writers have used this framework to theorise the social control of bodies in terms of their gender performance (Rubin, 1984; Butler, 1990; Haber, 1996; Deveaux, 1996; Young, 2005). Women are expected to yield to the contextually sensitive norms of femininity, resulting in gender inequalities including, among others, a lack of access to material resources. This is a structural inequality in which “whose occupants are privileged or disadvantaged in relation to one another due to the adherence of actors to institutional rules and norms” (Young, 2005: 21). Those that fail to live up to these rules and norms (for example, normative heterosexuality) find themselves punished along this continuum. These are socially constructed, context-dependent notions of “respectability” and the social (and material) fall-out of failing to live up to the standards.

Foucault’s theories of this normalising gaze is mapped architecturally through the Panopticon, a closed circular structure where individuals are placed in cells, their only view being a singular tower in the centre (Foucault, 1977). The goal is for an unquestioned, unseen authority to operate a 360-degree view of individuated subjects. Although Foucault contends that the structure itself is responsible for “creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it” (1977: 201), the position in the centre of the Panopticon, the “all-knowing eye”, remains a “privileged place” (1977: 204). From this single mechanism or the institution of the prison, the panoptic normalising gaze is generalisable to a larger disciplined society: “Our society is one ... of surveillance... the play of signs defines the anchorages of power; ... it is rather that the individual is carefully fabricated in it, according to a whole technique of forces and bodies” (1977: 217). From the panoptic gaze, individuals within a disciplinary society not only monitor and curtail behaviour in response to the central tower, but also self-regulate and regulate others. They internalise the normalising gaze.

The Panopticon is also a system of knowledge. From the gaze brings constant knowledge gathering of the subjects, as seen through Foucault’s initial example of the panoptic gaze

employed to monitor a town infected by the plague (1977: 196-7). In response to confusion of disease, the state recorded all signs, symptoms, deaths, and illness; a centralised figure observed and recorded all individuals and their behaviour within the town: “The plague is met by order; its function is to sort out every possible confusion” (1977: 197). Through this monitoring, marking, and collection of knowledge of the subjects, power is exerted.

Although Foucault has been indelibly influential in certain feminist arguments, there have been widespread criticisms of him as well. Primarily, Foucault is not a feminist: “Most feminists point to Foucault’s androcentric gender blindness; some do not regard it as a fatal flaw; others believe it contaminates the entire enterprise” (Sawicki, 1996: 161). Although Foucault’s main writing considers the rules and techniques of power, discourse, and knowledge on subjected individuals, he never considers the role of gendered subjectivities. Deveaux (1996) also points to his work on discipline and punishment, where Foucault contends discipline has little use for violence; as such, he separates the surreptitious forms of social control with overt uses of violence. However, this binary does not account for women’s experiences of rape, lack of reproductive justice, and domestic violence; Deveaux insists that in separating them, Foucault’s analysis fails to consider the systemic nature of violence against women and its control over their bodies (1996: 215).

More so, critics take issue with Foucault’s portrayal of “docile bodies”, passively inscribed with discourses and power, and yet at the same time he insists that all forms of power meet with resistances (Sawicki, 1996: 151). Haber (1996) asks, in following Foucault’s arguments, if power is inscribed in all bodies, bodies that are also complicit in this system, and there is no “outside” this field of power, then how can this be resisted? Haber contends that the political battle should be fought through the subversion of “bodily possibilities” (1996: 141). Butler, in *Gender Trouble* (1990), also argues that identities are a normative function. Instead, she contends, rather that the goal should instead be one of “subversive possibilities for sexuality and identity within the terms of power itself,” rather than seeking something “beyond” or “outside.” Resistance is found

in the daily negotiation of gendered expectations, blurring the lines of respectability and the strict boundaries of “appropriate” behaviours.

### **2.3 Space, Fear, and Subjectivities**

In engaging with embodiment, the perception and experience of differing spaces is a dominant interest in my research. I intend to question participants on how they relate and experience different environments and how they define those spaces within their own conceptions of the terrain. In studying how participants move between their home country and South Africa, undoubtedly issues of security will arise. In a later section, I will address the context of South Africa in terms of issues of violence and safety, while this section will specifically focus on previous research addressing fear of crime, geography, and gender.

Research on the association between fear, insecurity, and certain locations has continued for the last three decades. Pain (2000) writes a review of the first 20 years of study on relations between place and fear of crime. Despite such a history, few researchers have questioned the fundamental meaning of “fear of crime”, which Pain argues is generally indistinct and variable, particularly in quantitative data that does not allow participants to develop a meaning of their own. Through her work, Pain’s working definition of “fear of crime” is “the wide range of emotional and practical responses to crime and disorder individuals and communities may make” (Pain, 2000: 367).

The first such research on fear of crime primarily attempted to “design-out” feelings of fear and vulnerability. Considerably concerned with the built environment associated with fear, Pain criticises such work for its methodology in using quantitative methods to explain human behaviour and ignoring how fear of crime is “multifaceted and dynamic” (2000: 369). Later work, including her own, considered the relations between identity, social exclusion, and spaces, including theorising how the “Other” came to be associated with danger, which “reinforces the situation of oppressed groups on the boundaries of society” (2000: 374-5). She contends that spatialisation of fear and insecurity erupts

subjectivities as individuals occupy changing spaces and contexts. As such, I will consider the subjective positions of participants within my research as they negotiate and move through changing social relations and spaces of insecurity.

Pain concludes her review in noting the under-research arena of men's fear, and how compulsory heterosexuality is the single biggest risk to both men and women's security (2000: 375). While it is well established through feminist social control theory that women's fear is a "manifestation of gender oppression and a damaging control on women's lives" (2000: 374), more work needs to consider the roles of masculinities within the area of spatialised fear. Fear of crime, she concludes, is specific to social and historical contexts through the interplay of space and bodily relations.

Valentine's work has employed feminist geography to a number of topics from the heterosexing of space (1996) to locations of fear (1989). She investigates women's conceptions of dangers in different spaces resulting from different sources of information on male violence (1992). Although her study is located in the United Kingdom, her assertion that for women there is a "mismatch between the geography of violence and the geography of fear" (1992: 22) would also translate within the South African context. Despite statistics that show most women are at risk within the home, "women are still encouraged to perceive the home (private sphere) as a haven of safety and refuge and to associated the public world where the behaviours of strangers is unpredictable with male violence" (1992: 23-24). As Valentine's work demonstrates, individuals associate certain geographic locations with fear and insecurity more so than others. With the constant discourse inside and outside of South Africa of the problems of crime and violence, it is easy to anticipate that some participants would arrive fearfully in Cape Town.

Within research on migration and gender, Silvey argues for the value of considering the theories of feminist geography to concepts of the "spatialities of power" (2006: 65). Historically, geography and studies of migration would negate women's mobility by drawing specific borders and scales that were coded as masculine. For example, Silvey cites the "seminal" work of Ravenstein that showed, generally speaking, women were more mobile within their home country while men maintain mobility more

internationally. Silvey contends that the size of Ravenstein's framework – only considering national borders – negates women's day-to-day mobility within cities and regions that far outweigh men's (2006: 67).

Furthermore, Silvey points to the agency of subjects emphasized through a feminist analysis of geographies and migration. While identities and the meanings of space are specific to contexts and histories, new work “increasingly emphasized the co-constructed nature of identities and places and the ongoing nature of this process” (2006: 69). Not simply are these identities and spaces constructed and negotiated, but they develop in the moment, constantly in flux, through discursive production. She cites research in the UK on second-generation South Asian women (Silvey, 2006: 69). In this community, the women define themselves on the margins of their parents' South Asian immigrant community, contrasting with their parents identities as the “Other” within the United Kingdom. The young women construct new subject positions in relation to the historical contexts as young South Asian women and second-generation immigrants on the margins of their parents “foreignness”. As such, this research will consider how the participants themselves participate in the co-construction and creation of discourses of specific places and subjectivities.

To conclude this section, I will look at Mehta and Bondi's (1999) research on first-year students at the University of Edinburgh. I found this article in particular beneficial for its use of embodiment theory and feminist geographies to consider how students adopt and embody particular discursive techniques and subjectivities to regain control of their bodily security. Without essentialising genders with sex-role theory, Mehta and Bondi adopt a post-structuralist approach in considering “gendered subjectivity in terms of multiple, shifting, and potentially contradictory subject positions, which individuals take up through engagement with a range of discourses and social practices” (1999: 69). In questioning the students about their feelings of safety at the university and how they survive, Mehta and Bondi report how they adopted specific strategies to manage the insecurity of their bodies and regain control in some potentially hostile zones. These strategies include “mobilising discourse creatively” in adopting particular subjectivities

to profit from “the tangible benefits to be gained by being a particular type of person and interacting with others in particular ways” (1999: 70). For example, female students often referred to fear as more “paranoid”, thus disassociated themselves with the conception of the “hysterical, fearful women”. Men, on the other hand, would describe the techniques of avoiding violence as an exercise in masculine self-control and rationality (1999: 75-6). Although most students reported some feelings of vulnerability and fear, they engaged in practices of self-regulation and monitoring of themselves and others to empower themselves (1999: 75). This article was particularly beneficial in demonstrating an analysis that adopts post-structural theories of embodiment in considering how students discursively employ agency to negotiate through spaces of insecurity.

Furthermore, “fear of crime” is not a direct reflection of the reality of crime in a particular space (Valentine, 1992). Instead, Valentine argues that parents play a particular role in spatialising danger, in particular for young women and girls, for whom they “instil a sense of vulnerability in public space ... which consequently affects their behaviour and use of space” (1992: 25). The media also plays a key role in spreading spatial information regarding crime and safety. Furthermore, Valentine contends that the relationship between social contacts and media stories produces a cycle of information and repeated discourses that reinforce notions of “safe” behaviours in specific spatial arenas (1992: 27). Valentine describes this in her study as “providing an arena for informal comment and interpretation by other women as to who is responsible for the victim’s fate. This therefore provides a standard against which women evaluate their own spatial movement and hence vulnerability” (1992: 27).

Lemanski (2004) undergoes an analysis of spatial restrictions arising from the increasingly gated communities in South Africa as a result of fear of crime. She divides reactions to fear of crime in two ways: Either “altered lifestyle (e.g. restricted spatial movement, limited social interaction)” and, her research focus, “spatial responses”, changes in “urban form”, such as these gated communities (2004: 101). However, I find the binary problematic because I believe responses such as gated communities would thus limited your ability for social interaction. Burglar bars and fear of going outside the gates



of your home is restricting bodily movement and freedom. These ideas, presented as divergent, actually intersect at the moment a body comes up against the gates. As such, my study will conflate the two under the analysis of discourses of insecurity framing responses that restrict and regulate the free movement of bodies, some bodies more than others (for example, marginalised sexualities, non-conforming gender performances, the bodies of foreigners, and the elderly, among others). However, what Lemanski (2004) does focus on is how fortifying residential homes and communities has effectively backfired with those individuals reporting an ever-increasing fear of crime even within their neighbourhoods.

Most of this literature comes from the global North, and Southern research studies predominantly rely on victims' surveys to reflect on a fear of crime (Schönteich, 2000; Lemanski, 2004; Mistry, 2004). Victims' surveys do reflect the geographic disconnect between fear of crime and reality: "...Women report fear at levels that are three times that of men, yet women's recorded risk of personal violence... [is] lower than men's. Those who admit feeling safest – young men – reveal the greatest proportion of personally violent victimization" (Stanko, 1995: 47). However, Stanko also critiques a predominant use of victims' surveys because such surveys never unearth theories as to why there is this disconnect. Also, feminist research on gendered violence reveals how women's experiences often includes incidences – such as public groping, street harassment, obscene phone calls, or sexual harassment – that are not considered crimes (1995: 50). These are parts of the "reality of sexual violence... [that] is a core component of being female and is experienced through a wide range of everyday, mundane situations" (1995: 50). Importantly, what Stanko also points to is how victims' surveys often only consider rape as a possible sexual crime women fear, thus discounting these more "mundane" and – I argue – more insidious forms of sexual violence and discrediting women's legitimate fears of them.

As such, I believe it is important to bridge the gap between Northern literature on gendered fear of crime and women's everyday experiences of sexual violence to this Southern context. In both contexts, the most common experiences of violence against

women occur in the home and a friend or intimate partner (Pain, 2000; Jewkes and Abrahams, 2002). I do not wish to repeat the common misconception that this is not the case, that women's victimization is "stranger danger" in the Cape Town terrain. However, I wish to highlight these "everyday" forms of gendered violence – such as public harassment - that are often overlooked within the South African context, one which has extremely high levels of rape, domestic violence, and femicide and their resulting impact on the HIV epidemic (Wood and Jewkes, 1997; Jewkes and Abrahams, 2002; Dunkle, et al, 2004).

Bowman (1993) describes public harassment as objectifying and/or threatening speech from men, targeting women, in the case where neither party knows the other. She explains why these attentions in public, though seemingly innocuous, are in fact curtailing women's free mobility. Unlike men, she argues, women's bodies are coded in public spaces as "open" – either they should remain in private spheres or open to the exchanges with men, who convey their message through intrusions on women's space and privacy (1993: 526).

When previously researching issues of sexual and reproductive rights, a quote from Jessica Horn in *Feminist Africa 6* struck me:

Our bodies are our primary means of participating socially, economically, politically, spiritually and creatively in society. They are the beginning point of the practical application of rights; the place in which rights are exercised, and for women in particular, the place where rights are most often violated. Without knowledge of and control over our bodies, including our sexuality, women's rights can be neither fully exercised nor enjoyed (2006: 8).

I intend to ask each participant about their own conception of safety, but moving forward with De Bruyn's (2002) definition, safety is both freedom from danger and freedom from fear: "Safety encompasses the freedom from danger or risk as well as the fear of potential victimisation" (2002: 81). It is important to study the impact of this fear and feelings of vulnerability in context of human rights. If, as Horn (2006) contends that for human rights to be fully exercised, women must be in full control of

their bodily autonomy, then women's fear and experiences of vulnerability and danger must also be considered an affliction to their full expression of rights.

#### **2.4. Language and “Foreignness”**

In this section, I will present previous research on language, group identity, the meaning of “foreignness” and the relations to power. Language will confront and explode differences for students from outside South Africa. All students attending UCT will be required to use English; however, South Africa has 10 other national languages, including Afrikaans, Xhosa, and Zulu, the most predominant with English. Furthermore, their use of language, or their inability to use a local language other than English, will erupt feelings of “foreignness.” This sense of being an “Other” within South Africa takes a new dimension in light of recent xenophobic attacks and ongoing discourses circulating regarding the meaning of “foreign bodies” within the national boundaries.

Pierre Bourdieu (1991) places language usages under a theoretical frame of a marketplace and the relative profit (material, social, linguistic, symbolic) gained through a “habitus” in a specific field. He firstly criticises linguists such as Chomsky and Saussure for taking for granted a universal norm of language – the “state language” – and in doing so, ignored the social and historical production of that language and its location as the dominant regime over other variations and dialects. Bourdieu marks the advent of “official” languages with the creation of the nation-state and later reproduced through education systems, which generate students for higher skilled, non-industrial positions (1991: 49). The education system – such as higher education and universities - imbibes power and prestige to the competent use of the state language, marking it as the language also of knowledge and power. The creation of a language norm of usage sets up a system of hierarchy in relation to and levelled against that norm: “The social uses of language owe their specifically social value to the fact that they tend to be organized in systems of differences ... which reproduce, in the symbolic order of differential deviations, the system of social differences” (Bourdieu, 1991: 54). Language is another means and avenue through which power is distributed, designated, or revoked and through which a

sense of “difference” may erupt. As UCT requires students to use English, which may not be a foreign students first or primary language, how would their experience and interpretation of their language use and skill level influence their transition to the new university context? How would the discourse of an educational and intellectual “elite” that perhaps surrounds a campus such as UCT emerge within the embodiment of an international student's transition, following Bourdieu's arguments of a hierarchy of “correct” language use?

Saunders (2003) edited a compilation of chapters under the heading *The Concept of the Foreign*, an interdisciplinary discussion on the meaning of “foreign”. In her several introductory chapters, Saunders argues that the foreign is both an obvious and ambiguous terms, but one that relates to a figure that does not belong in relation to a constructed home and site of belonging:

“... The word *foreign* designates a quality or an entity conceived relatively: the foreign is always relative to the inside, the domestic, the familiar, a boundary. No entity is inherently foreign; s/he who is a foreigner in one place is at home in another; as the familiar is altered or a boundary redrawn, so too is the character of the foreign...” (2003: 3)

As such, Saunders interrogates both the meaning of being the “impure” and not belonging, but also, “What does belong?” As a result, the construction of a person or object as “foreign” reflexively questions the meaning of the “home” and “nation”. For example, in its most common meaning and the one invoked within this research, the “foreign” refers to a citizen and/or body not belonging to the particular nation-state of South Africa. In delineating an individual as “not belonging”, it invites questions of who comprises the citizens of South Africa, it questions the cohesiveness of this nation-state, and it “*interrogates* the familiar” (2003: 5). It brings up the question, “Who does “belong” in South Africa?”

In its relation and opposition to concepts that are themselves unstable, “foreignness” as a concept is inherently shaky and questionable. Yet, “for however conceptually vague,

foreignness is nonetheless both symbolically sharp and social consequential” (2003: 12). For being a “foreign” body, it invokes both fear and discrimination, being pathologised in a manner similar to other marginalised social groups (women, the homeless, children, the physically disabled, the poor), and essentialised by dominant paradigm that imbibe “foreigners” actions and characteristics as their immutable essences, Saunders argues.

## **2.5. The South African Context**

As I base my research on the theory that our gendered performances and discourses are critically tied to specific locations, I believe it is important to consider the very drastic change in spaces between a participant’s home country and South Africa. While it is not within the scope and depth of this research to examine the deep historical and social contexts of all 15 countries within the SADC, I wish to highlight some of the unique characteristics of the South African contexts that the participants are likely to encounter within their initial experiences within the country. This is done not to promote the notion of a South African “exceptionalism”, but for considerations of conciseness and focus within this literature review.

Safety is not only related to a person’s perception of potential victimization, but also the real risk of becoming a victim of crime and/or violence (De Bruyn, 2002: 83). As such, the following will explore the varying forms of violence participants may encounter while in South Africa. Furthermore, upon a transition to South African spaces, I expect students will encounter varying, even contradictory discourses describing the nature of this context in regards to race, poverty, language, and gender.

I still wish to present some information regarding the (partial) reality of crime from statistics and crime victims’ surveys. The reason being, I do not wish to portray the participants’ fears as lacking a basis in reality. There is crime in South Africa, students at UCT have recently been murdered (Warner 2010), and the fear they may feel is a very understandable reaction to the oftentimes violent and sadly common accounts of crime in the press.

In considering these fears in light of the reality of crime in South Africa, is important to qualify the nature of crime statistics. Statistics, provided by the South African Police Service, are first and foremost only of crime reported to the police. As Jewkes and Abrahams (2002) demonstrate in their research of gender-based violence, very often crimes of this nature, such as domestic assault (often construed as “private”), are not commonly reported to police.

Schönteich (2000) examines crime information from both Interpol and crime victims’ surveys to compare South Africa to other African nations. He claims it is unfair when comparing South Africa’s crime rate to situations in developed countries, where there are far more developed justice systems, more money for security and policing, and different contexts in terms of the socio-economic conditions (Schönteich, 2000).

According to his culmination of Interpol crime statistics (that examined 110 countries in total) South Africa ranks the highest in violent crimes of rape and murder, second highest in violent robbery, and fourth highest in serious assaults (Schönteich, 2000). However, according to the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research (which examined 17 countries, seven in Africa), within the continent, South Africa ranks second in sexual assaults to Uganda. In robberies, South Africa ranks third after Tunisia and Zimbabwe. Strikingly, South Africa’s victims report the highest rate of weapons used on them during a crime; “...South African victims of crime are more likely to be attacked or threatened with a weapon compared to victims of all the surveyed African countries. Not surprisingly, South African assault victims are very likely to suffer serious injuries” (Schönteich, 2000).

Mistry (2004) also used a victims’ survey, the 2003 National Victims’ Survey conducted by the Institute of Security Studies, to compile statistics that show the paradox that while crime is falling in South Africa, fears are increasing. From the 1998 victims’ survey to 2003, reported crime fell from 24.5% to 22.9%. At the same time, South Africans report feeling less safe – the percentage of respondents who reported feeling very unsafe in their

area at night more than doubled (from 25% to 54%) during the same time period (2004: 20). Particularly in urban and metropolitan areas, 53% of those reported felt that crime had increased (2004: 19).

I also wish to point to the current events in the university area that occurred as the participants' entered into UCT and during the fieldwork for this research. The academic year (or the first day of classes) began on 8 February 2010, and I conducted fieldwork from 25 January to 18 March. On 12 February, UCT student Joseph Dominic Giddy, 22, was stabbed in Observatory, a nearby neighbourhood with many student residences (Warner, 2010). This incident was only a few months after the shooting death of another UCT student Pakiso Moqobane, 19, also in Observatory. The *Cape Argus* and *Cape Times*, the two largest English newspapers in Cape Town, both reported the incidents, and the Vice Chancellor Max Price emailed information to all registered students (Price, 2010).

### **2.5.1. Gender-Based Violence**

Although the piece is extremely dated, Human Rights Watch (1995) provides an in-depth scope of the issues women face concerning domestic violence and rape in South Africa during the transition to a democratic government. At the time of its writing, many of the major pieces of legislation concerning these issues had not been drafted. However, many of the problems described in the book are still pertinent. Human Rights Watch estimates nearly one in three South African women will be raped and one in six is in an abusive relationship (1995: 3). Women facing gender-based violence also confront a hostile judicial and legal system, police services that do not take rape seriously and have an ignorance of rape laws, sub-standard medical services, and entrenched social attitudes that condone violence (1995: 3-4).

Human Rights Watch describes the challenges all women face in seeking justice. The authors contend a main problem for women is a lack of centralized services to treat medical problems, take evidence, and deal with police (1995: 98). Human Rights Watch

commits most of its information to problems of dealing with the justice system; they only briefly address medical and psychological issues and rarely address the social stigma associated with rape survivors. However, the authors' overview of the issue, although dated, provides a background of legal and social policy on domestic violence and rape, predominantly on concerns of obtaining justice for the crimes. Human Rights Watch's research exposes how pervasive the problem of gender-based violence is and how rape and domestic violence in South Africa systematically curtail women's human rights and access to full citizenship. International students, who have only recently immigrated to South Africa, may face additional challenges in understanding and negotiating the legal justice system.

Despite the impossibility of eliciting reliable quantitative data on the rate of gender-based violence, "the fragments of evidence suggest that the experience of non-consensual or coerced sexual intercourse at some stage in a South African women's life is certainly the norm and may be little short of universal," conclude Jewkes and Abrahams (2002: 1240) in their overview of statistical data on sexual assault. A huge system of barriers impede the collection of information on rape - recollection on the part of the survivor, the differences between legal and popular notions of rape, the relationship between the survivor and the perpetrator, survivor's access to police, and the universal stigma against rape survivors (Jewkes and Abrahams, 2002).

However, women with post-secondary education (such as those attending UCT) were eight times more likely to report the incident to police than uneducated women; women in urban areas and younger women were also more likely to report the crimes (Jewkes and Abrahams, 2002: 1235). The authors contend that gender inequality is at the root of the problem of gender-based violence in South Africa; "Both sexual and physical violence against women form part of a repertoire of strategies of control" (2002: 1238). Gender-based violence occurs along a spectrum of violence – from rape to seemingly innocuous incidents of "catcalling" along Main Road in Cape Town. All forms and incidents of violence along this spectrum constitute an attempt at controlling women. As such, it is likely that many international students have or will experience some level of



gender-based violence. If, as Jewkes and Abrahams contend, “the ability to control women in such ways has been described as essential (in the hegemonic masculinity) to attainment of the status of being a ‘successful’ or ‘real’ man,” does this differ greatly from experiences in a participant’s home country? If hegemonic masculinity entails the control of women, how does this influence the embodiment of gender within the particular context of South Africa? Furthermore, are there particular locations and contexts that women associate with fears of sexual violence? Is there discordance between the location of women’s fear and the reality of where these crimes occur, as reported by Valentine’s (1992) study?

Because of the financial requirements (and burdens) on these international students, many of them do not face the same systems of poverty that many South African women face, which increase their vulnerability to gender-based violence (Human Rights Watch, 1995). However, they may still be subject to certain levels of violence, but also lack some of the survival and coping strategies through family networks and understanding of the local legal and healthcare systems. Jewkes and Abrahams (2002) point out that women who are economically dependent on the perpetrator of gender-based violence (such as a husband or boyfriend) “find it very difficult to protect themselves from sexual exploitation and very often have to tolerate abuse.” While this may be true of those facing socio-economic dependence, does the same hold true for international students, who may be facing emotional and/or mental dependency on relationships with abuse because they reside far away from their families and friends in their home countries?

### **2.5.2. Xenophobic Violence**

Following the attacks in May 2008, xenophobia and subsequent violence stemming from fear, distrust, and antagonism towards foreign Africans within South Africa is undoubtedly a source of concern for international students from the SADC region. Beginning on May 11, the violence spread mainly through the poor townships outside of Johannesburg and Cape Town. Approximately 62 people were killed, 670 wounded, and an estimated 30,000 to 100,000 were displaced because of the violence (AFP, 2008).

However, the incident was not reflective of an isolated sentiment among South Africans. Steenkamp argues, “Although the events of May 2008 were unprecedented in its scale, geographical reach and intensity, antagonism amongst South Africans toward foreigners was already embedded in social life and official political discourse” (2009: 441). She contends that despite an earlier camaraderie among black Africans in South Africa during the apartheid years, the post-1994 democracy, in fact, increased xenophobia toward foreign Africans.

I believe xenophobia is another theme for exploration within this research because of the very physical and identifiable ways participants may embody differences. Physical features, language, skin colour, among others, are all ways international students embody differences between themselves and South Africans. Because of the historical existence of xenophobic violence and the very public and shocking nature of the attacks of two years ago, I believe that issues of difference and the fear of xenophobic attacks will arise when discussing fear, safety, and changing spaces.

Xenophobia relies on myths and stereotypes about foreigners, such as rumours that accuse them of committing crimes, spreading diseases, stealing jobs from citizens, and overloading social services (Steenkamp, 2009: 439-440). Under apartheid, Adepoju says, the government only allowed a limited number of migrant workers on two-year contracts from the neighbouring countries of Botswana, Swaziland, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and, most predominantly, Lesotho (Adepoju, 2003: 7). Following the 1994 elections and the opening of South Africa’s economy to international trade and business, people who were previously banned from entering South Africa from their home countries, especially some highly skilled workers, viewed the new democracy as a viable alternative to Europe, the United States, and Canada (Adepoju, 2003: 5). Following 1994 and the “prospect of a booming economy,” many of these highly skilled immigrants moved into the South African economy, and were seen as a threat by the “emerging black elite class” (2003: 11-12). The increased migration after 1994 must also be viewed in context of “frustrated expectations about the socio-economic dividends of democracy” (Steenkamp, 2009: 442). Steenkamp further argues that the official policy line of the

South African government following the crisis in Zimbabwe has further aggravated a sense that immigrants from the northern neighbour have little legitimate reason for leaving their home country (2009: 443). These factors – frustrations over job prospects, slow service delivery, a historic notion that South Africa is exceptional within the continent (Steenkamp, 2009: 443), high crime and HIV/AIDS infection rates - create a xenophobic environment which international participants may encounter in Cape Town.

Although the 2008 attacks were largely black South Africans targeting black African foreigners, Crush (2000) notes that antagonism toward foreigners cuts across all race and class lines in South Africa, resulting in arguable one of the most xenophobic countries in the world. Crush summarizes several surveys conducted by the Southern African Migration Project regarding the attitudes of South African's toward foreigners and the attitudes of immigrants within South Africa. He points out that the Bill of Rights guarantees basic political, cultural, and socio-economic rights to all those who reside within the Republic, despite their citizenship status (2000: 104). In fact, the only rights not reserved for non-citizens are the right to vote and the right of freedom of business transactions (2000: 110). Despite the extension of human rights on a policy level, South Africans disagree greatly with this situation – about 40% opposed foreign Africans receiving the same access to health and education services, with white South Africans opposing it even more so (2000: 111-112). The surveys also reported a low level of knowledge of the Bill of Rights and very scant understanding that the human rights delineated within the Constitution extend to all those within the South African borders (2000: 111).

In conceptualizing embodiment and migration, it is important to emphasize that the students participating in this study have crossed borders in order to arrive here. What xenophobic violence does is emphasise that transition and articulate and target particular differences perceived among those all living within the same spaces.

## **2.6. Conclusion**

While this literature review is far from an exhaustive look, I believe it highlights many of the intersecting themes and disciplines I expect to encounter when engaged in fieldwork. How will students negotiate changing discourses and the resulting bodily regulation in the transition to their first few months at UCT? What encounters will new languages, discourses around security, and the extremely racialised context of South Africa will they embody? What new discourses will they employ, and possibly create, in order to survive this new environment?

University of Cape Town

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Feminism in Research

What is the meaning and purpose of feminism within research? While Stanley previously defined this as “investigating the ‘condition of women in sexist society’” (Stanley, 1990), we must consider first what we mean when claiming a feminist standpoint before engaging with the research process. In coming into this space as a feminist and critically analysing its meaning with a research process, there are several ongoing arguments related to the role of feminism within research, and inversely, the role of research within feminism as a movement and a range of activisms.

The concept of gender itself arose as a way to “conceptualise the social construction of masculinity and femininity” (Mbilinyi, 1992: 34); a language was produced through decades of research to critically examine the condition of “women”, their role, and their oppression in a sexist society. As Kvale (1996) argues, feminist research began with the notion that women themselves, focusing on women’s experiences, and taking women’s oppression as a basic assumption, must conduct such research.

However, post-structuralist feminists, according to Mbilinyi (1992), took issue with this assertion. This perception, as previously described by Kvale, reifies the oppression of women by framing them within a totalising and essentialising structure through which their only common basis is their overwhelming oppression by men. A totalising category of “women” is “produced and restrained by the very structures through which emancipation is sought” (Butler, 1990: 2). Making this assumption within the research process causes “subjugated voices [to be] ... silenced this way, along with their history of contestation, resistance, and struggle” (Mbilinyi, 1992: 38).

Why is there a struggle to assert a category of “women”? As Stanley (1990) had argued, feminist researchers were attempting to investigate “women”, their condition and voices, within a patriarchal system. The opinions and experiences of “women” were of

fundamental value for feminist researchers, who struggled to illuminate these voices that were marginalised through masculinist systems of epistemology. However, what emerged were the questions of representation (of the Other), positionality, and this problem of essentialising (of “women”, the “Third World”, “black”) without the deconstruction of the “social and historical institutions in which they are located” (Palmary, 2006: 32).

In deconstructing the notion of a shared oppression by all “women”, critics feared the disintegration of activism - the goal of change and the unity and mobilisation to create it – in following a post-structural feminism: “The apparent substitution of gender for women suggests a distraction away from the central focus: The liberation of women from gender oppression” (Mbilinyi, 1992: 46). However, others argued that through this approach, feminist researchers may deconstruct and destabilise the very systems of oppression that create such categories. As Butler argues, feminist researchers and activists should instead attempt to decentre these systems of power - “subversive possibilities for sexuality and identity within the terms of power itself” (1990: 30) – instead of reestablishing categories of oppression.

However, through these debates, the epistemic power often remains rested within the traditional seats of power – Northern academics, First World women, who speak only within the academy (Nagar, 2003). Even in the growing literature from Southern academics and researcher, Nagar (2003) worries that they mimic the methodological approach of the Northern academy, with no real radical change in epistemological power and methodologies. She believes that these systems have produced a widening gap between the goals of Southern activists and the theories from Northern academics, that the subaltern subjects remain not only removed from the production of knowledge, but also removed from the goals of the knowledge and research itself.

Palmary (2006) engages with similar debates. She criticises Western feminist researchers, who have “dominated both the academic literature and the forms of activism that have been taking up globally”, on their representation of the Other - marginalised and essentialised “women” that have typically not had “access to process of knowledge

production” (2006: 31).

As such, in engaging as a feminist researcher, I must consider the following questions presented through this analytic framework:

- How does my own position, as an academic, a researcher, a feminist, the materiality of my body, and the privilege and power I embody, influence and impact the research question, methodology, fieldwork, interpretation, and writing of this thesis? How do I problematise, historicize, and destabilise my own positionality to “attend to the geo-politics of inequality [that] furthers the legitimations of imperialist agendas” (Palmary, 2006: 33)?
- How does this thesis, its writing, findings, methodology, and question, contribute to the project to “deconstruct and decentre dominant structure[s]” (Mbilinyi, 1992: 46)?
- How may I demystify research and knowledge? How do I account for my epistemic power? In accounting to standpoint theories, “that some standpoints have been privileged over others” (Palmary, 2006: 42), how may I use this power to develop counter-narratives?
- Do my engagements with research participants “Other” these subjects? Or, do I analyse and reflect on the micro-politics of the research situation through our subjectivities and power, not merely note it?
- How do I represent the voice of these subjects and participants? Do these representations essentialise their experience, totalise their worlds, or provide a variety of voices, subjectivities, and experiences nested within negotiations of power and identity? What are the political implications of such a representation, and does this serve the dominant ways of thinking or subvert it?

### 3.2 Positionality

Positionality, the question of the social, political, and material location of the researcher, and its role within the research process, has become a central tenet of feminist research within the last several decades.

Social research primarily rose through the positivist tradition, following a Cartesian philosophy of the dual mind/body makeup of human interaction and thus knowledge production. Kvale describes this as a reaction to the religious (the Church) dogma over knowledge and science in Enlightenment that contributed to bringing social science beyond “myth and common sense” (1996: 61). In relation to the researcher, positivist social science sought to minimize the influence of the producer (human factor) of knowledge, relying only on observable (quantitative) data, a set of “facts” distinguished from values. The researcher was “objective”, engaging in merely “observational procedures leading to the construction of social facts” (Kvale, 1996: 63). One’s objectivism, an impassive interest, an unbiased perspective, was central to the goals of positivism in “discovering” these “facts”.

However, such a claim to “objective truth” negates the presence of situated knowledges, that “all knowledge is situated and perspectival” (Palmary, 2006: 41). Despite still clinging to claims of an “objective” researcher, later social research adopted qualitative methods, such as interviewing, following critiques of positivism. This modern approach pulled in the question of the researcher as a subject of interest; modern social research took seriously the question of the researcher as a locus of the theory and praxis of knowledge production.

Later researchers and feminists would criticise this period of feminist research as totalising to women as it advocated that women must conduct and write research regarding the status of women in feminist research (Kvale, 1996). Much like women in development approaches today (Mbilinyi, 1992), these methodologies normalised the perspective of the, typically, white, heterosexual, Western women, who, while



acknowledging their identities, failed to account for how this subjective position influenced all aspects of the research process: “[The] feminist researcher begins with a disclaimer or self-disclosure about one’s own subjectivity... only to continue with the presentation of one’s work as if unfettered by this self-disclosure” (Palmary, 2006: 37).

Positionality remains important for feminist research for a variety of reasons. Firstly, it attempts to decentre the power established and inherent with a research process where an individual (or group thereof) contends to “speak” and represent “the Other” through the words and experiences of the researched. In order to account for issues of representation, which, in a post-structuralist perspective, deconstruct and historicize the institutions, social relations, subjectivities, and micro-politics that comprise the experiences and oppression of “women”, the researcher must do the same. Otherwise, she (or he) remains complicit in normalising the dominant perspective, reifying their epistemic power. For example, excluding an analysis of my whiteness and its historical and social influence within knowledge and this research, reiterates my whiteness as “the norm in relation to which the ... [Other] woman is produced” (Palmary, 2006: 39).

Second, positionality strives to analyse, thus decentre, the inherent privilege in writing and researching as an academic. As gender relations have changed over time, we now see the emergence of writing and knowledge production by “women”; however, in homogenizing this identity, we ignore the details of *which* women are writing. Are we negating the manifest ways in which power flows through subjectivities, and the relations of power through race, class, geo-political spaces, and age, among others? A historical approach should be adopted, whereby the researcher questions, “how such knowledge is produced – that is, who produces it and how it becomes privileged” (Bhavnani, 1994: 27). The researcher must account for this privilege and power by acknowledging how it comes to influence the research itself in the questions being asked, sources and theories used, micro power relations within the fieldwork and with the subjects of research, and the writing and analysis. As a feminist researcher, some of the epistemic power inherent in writing must be subverted through demystifying this research process, addressing negotiations and navigations within, and conceding the challenges during.

Finally, as a feminist researcher engaged with questions of subjectivity, relations of power, embodiment, and the everyday negotiations of expectations, oppression, and interaction with other bodies, dynamic positionality pulls the researcher into the world under the field of interrogation. As a researcher, an individual with a body in this specific historical and social space, I am also yanked through systems and negotiations of power within the research process, from the formation of a question to the process of writing and selection of information to include. The interrogation of positionality negates the myth of the removed, “objective” researcher. This includes an analysis of the researcher/participant relationship from search and sampling to interviews and representation. In her own examination of the power relations within a focus group, Bhavnani finds that, “The interviewees and myself were inscribed within multi-faceted power relations from which had both structural domination and structural subordinations in play on both sides” (1994: 34-5). As a post-structural feminist, positionality remains important as it recognises how every relationship and interaction, from engagement with research to bonds between the bodies of the researcher and the participants, becomes a dynamic play of perspectives and subjectivities.

### **3.2.1 Who is This “I” and Why it Matters?**

In engaging with positionality and the question of “I” within the research, I will begin at the point of my own subjectivity, the experience of the materiality of my body, with the adoption of this research question – the experiences of bodies crossing borders.

I am “read” as a young, white, European/American woman. However, in being a body across a border, I experienced (and am experiencing still) a transition to South Africa, learning the new meanings within this context while embodying a foreign nationality. Indeed, I have lived across quite a few borders – from the United States to Australia, South Korea, and South Africa. I believe that these experiences have informed my research in understanding the sensation of being a “foreign body” - where one must navigate the self through new discourses and is positioned within normalising judgements

that one is initially ignorant. I have also experienced the negotiation of adopting new subjectivities within a specific context – being the white foreign teacher in extremely homogenous South Korea; the white Texan exchange student at an Australian university and having to distance myself from the policies of the Bush Administration during the 2004 elections; the, again, white American student, being spoken to in Afrikaans, hearing racist ideologies because I am viewed as “sympathetic” because of the “reading” of my skin in South Africa. These experiences informed the selection of this research in understanding not only the participants and their transition, but my own. A discussion and comment from a friend made this question particularly salient: “I have never felt so gendered as a woman until I came to South Africa”. These discussions and personal experiences directly lead to me questioning the transition for a body crossing borders.

Furthermore, within the selection of methods, I felt most comfortable in engaging with participants through qualitative methods, such as the focus groups I eventually selected. Prior to beginning this master’s program, I was a journalist, trained in interviewing and writing for newspapers. This previous career required me to interview individuals on a daily basis, transcribe their words, and bring their perspectives, expertise, and knowledge into a story. As such, I simply felt more comfortable with this method in research. This previous experience with interviewing, I also believe, allowed me to understand the dynamic navigations of an interview and ways to engage with participants.

In the focus groups, I would interview anywhere between two and six participants at a time, within a gender- and race-mixed groups of UCT students from SADC countries. We shared a common identity within the university context as both “international” and as “students”. However, I cannot deny the institutional power nested within my role as a graduate student in relation to first-year undergraduate students, power that was re-established as my role as a “researcher” and facilitator of the focus groups – I was asking the questions, directing when we started, how the discussion flowed, the direction of questions, and when we concluded. Furthermore, as a native English speaker, I was conducting these interviews in English, privileging the participants who were also native English speakers and perhaps marginalising those with other home languages. I was also

“white”, privileged in a space that predominantly contained participants of colour (the participants included 22 black and coloured students, one white woman, and one Indian woman). Yet, in consideration of other embodied subjectivities, my gender as a “women” placed me in structural subordination to the men within the focus group and a shared location with the women. Within this space, the participants and I engaged in multi-dimensional relations of power around these embodied and institutional subjectivities.

How did this perhaps influence the focus groups and the data that arose from them? For example, within the focus group, oftentimes the issue of race would arise. I was initially concerned that my white skin would make participants hesitant to discuss occasions of racism levelled against them. Perhaps they would not feel comfortable discussing race and racism with a white person? Because within this relationship, the materiality of my “personhood cannot be left behind” (Stanley and Wise, 1993: 161). As a researcher, my whiteness is inseparable in the reading from others, including the participants. However, in examination of the transcripts, it seemed many participants did feel comfortable, and, on many occasions, they spoke openly about race. Nevertheless, I cannot be sure that my own body did not alter or change these discussions. Even so, I do believe that my being a white *American* made those discussions more available to the participants. As I was not a white South African, not the direct source of racism in this context, I believe students were more forthcoming in these discussions. They could speak about the racism in South Africa and not implicate me in any way. Yet, I must concede that I am making claim to more “authenticity” of the data because of my American whiteness in comparison with a white South African researcher. Bhavnani (1994) questions such an assertion; for example, does a “matching” of subjectivities, where both researcher and participants are of the same race, make those results more “authentic” and “true”? I must qualify my own claim here: I can only say that perhaps my perceived distance from white South Africa made it more “authentic”. As multiple positions and relations are being navigated, I cannot say for certain that any “matching” or contention of a more “even” relation existed, resulting in more “truthful” data, but merely that it was taken into account. As another example, the participants and I are also both considered “foreign” in the South African context. However, I will concede that my “foreignness” in South Africa does not

mean the same as it does for the participants. As I will explain in my findings chapter on the meaning of “foreignness”, a white “foreigner” is often read more as a tourist than a black African “foreigner”, who instead is perceived as a “migrant”, and whose body is often the target of xenophobia.

While I will conclude the section on positionality, the “I” will arise again throughout this dissertation. As Palmary describes, analysing and acknowledging positionality “is not simply a confession ... but a reflection on the social relations that enable people to experience themselves in a particular way.... It is a consideration of how these identities are brought to the fore or hidden in the research process” (2006: 39). As a result, the role of the “I” and an analysis of myself, as the researcher, within this entire process, from methods to conclusion, will weave throughout.

### **3.3 Ethical Considerations**

I did indeed provide small incentives in joining the focus group – I offered pizza and juice, making this clear in all messages to possible participants. I feel that providing a meal was in no way going to alter the data, provide just an extra incentive for those wishing to come, and was in some way, a sign of gratitude for their time and effort in joining. Additionally, most focus groups took between 60 to 90 minutes, and took place between 17:00 and 18:30 (around dinnertime).

I made it clear in my consent and confidentiality forms both the purpose of my research and the data they were providing and my ethics around confidentiality. The content of this form is as follows:

I am engaging in a study on the experiences of transition for first-year students from the Southern African Development Community to their first few months at the University of Cape Town. I, the researcher Tessa Moll, am a master’s student at the African Gender Institute, and I will be asking questions regarding your experiences in moving to Cape Town, dating experiences, knowledge of South Africa, and anxieties you may be having in this move. Please feel free to share as much or as little as you wish and are comfortable with. The information you

provide will be transcribed and used for my master's dissertation for completion of my degree. I will be the only person who has access to your full name and contact information. If you wish to adopt a pseudonym, a fake first name, please let me know, and I will be happy to accommodate this change. If you have any further questions either during the focus group or after its completion, please also feel free to contact me at my e-mail address tessamoll@gmail.com.

My intention in providing confidentiality and options regarding anonymity stemmed from the possible delicate nature of the focus groups and the data within. Especially with sensitive and possibly private stories regarding race, crime, fears, dating, among others, I wanted to allow the participants to speak "freely", sharing only information and experiences they felt comfortable revealing to those within the room. Confidentiality and anonymity allowed them to understand that the information they provided would not be made available to others outside that room in a manner that could be linked back to them. Three participants adopted pseudonyms, which I used in every reference for them, including the transcripts. I did not ask why the participants wished to use a pseudonym. I also relayed the confidentiality information verbally during the start of the focus group, to which all participants also gave their verbal consent. On one occasion, a participant made it clear that he or she did not wish to have me include a small section of the interview in my dissertation. I did transcribe this data, but did not include it anywhere in this dissertation. Information the participants provided before or after the use of the tape recorder was not used as, I believe, the use of recording signified the "official" interview to the participants.

In the analysis and writing of findings section, I also wished to present the quotations in as much context as possible. In writing these chapters, I would often introduce the speaker, noting their country of origin, gender, and time at the university. On numerous occasions, I explained the conversation in which the quoted section originated, and/or footnote a longer portion of the quote to provide context.

### **3.4 Methods**

While feminist methodology does not dictate any particular method for research (Stanley,

1990; Reinharz, 1992), in addressing the aims and question of this research, I believed qualitative methods were particularly advantageous. In the positivist tradition of social research, qualitative methods were not perceived as “objective”. Instead, quantitative methods, which were observational, verifiable, and repeatable, could produce “facts”. Rejecting these assertions in later philosophies of science, the researchers heralded qualitative interviews for being a “uniquely sensitive and powerful method for capturing the experiences and lived meanings of the subjects’ everyday world” (Kvale, 1996: 70).

However, Kvale also argues that inherently, qualitative interviews themselves are not “progressive or oppressive; the value of the knowledge produced depends on the context and use of knowledge” (1996: 72). For example, the focus group was originally conceived for a not very progressive purpose - to supply market-research information following an increased appreciation of a consumer-driven market (1996: 70).

However, Madriz (2003) argues that focus groups, or group interviews, serves the aims of feminist methodology. For the participants themselves, focus groups may serve to alleviate the tension for those who find one-on-one interviews intimidating. In consideration of the aims of social justice, Madriz contends that focus groups create a space for participants to expose and validate their everyday experiences of subordination, resistance, and agency (2003: 364). This provides for a “multivocality of participants’ attitudes, experiences, and beliefs” (2003: 364.). One participant may recall and tell a story that would trigger a thought, memory, or feeling in another.

Furthermore, and most relevant to my research aims, focus groups allow for observation of “collective human interaction” (2003: 364.). Focus groups provide the opportunity to analyse how participants discuss issues with peers; how the focus group setting perhaps mimics that of “real” social situations. It also provides a setting to consider the role of conversation in a discourse analysis – the purpose behind how a participant uses discourse within this setting. Any hierarchies or observable relations of power are the construction of the participants themselves and useful for data and analysis. However, like methods of participant observation, Madriz (2003) contends that questions of

“authenticity” of these power relations still may arise, as the researcher is present. Despite such challenges of the validity of such emerging power relations within a focus group, the construction of a group dynamic allows the balance of power to shift away from the researcher/facilitator; “... Group interviews heighten the opportunities for participants to decide the direction and content of the discussion” (Madriz, 2003: 371). This “triggering” would allow me to remain as impassive as possible; I would simply facilitate or follow-up with questions, allowing the participants themselves to bring up topics.

Finally, the group interviews provided a space for debates and consensus around meanings and transition. Through the variety of voices, discussion, and debates, focus groups provided a set of data through which I could engage in analysis of discourses. Such a swath of data, filled with inconsistencies, contradictions, and debates, provided a text through which I could engage with discourse as the “politics of language and knowledge – the awareness that power is constructed in and through language” (Eisenstein, 1988: 10). In coming into this research space, focused on the deconstruction of boundaries, the politics of embodied relations, using focus group interviews gave me a set of data in which to analyse the discourses employed within group interactions.

While originally I had considered using ethnographic approaches, such as participant observation, the constrictions of time regrettably made this approach impossible. Another benefit of the focus group is the ability to accumulate a large amount of data (up to six interviews at once really) within a short amount of time (Madriz, 2003: 365). However, I believe that long-term ethnographic research with a similar aim in mind would aid further research. It would be very interesting to see how some of the findings I will present change through time, and how the data would be altered and aided by engaging in day-to-day life with these participants.

### **3.4.1 Seeking Participants**

In the creation of this study, I wanted to examine the experiences of foreign citizens



within a transition to South Africa. I selected to focus this research within the boundaries of international UCT students from the Southern African Development Community. The reasons for this were predicated on my own resources, ethics of research, and my accumulation of experiential understanding of the SADC region. Firstly, as a recent migrant and student myself, I did not have the financial resources to leave Cape Town, my city of residence, to travel to another urban space, perhaps Durban or Johannesburg, for research. Additionally, for financial reasons, I also did not have a car, which severely limited my mobility within the city itself. For those reasons, it made most sense to focus this research study within a space easily accessible for me – the university campus.

Furthermore, I felt ethically that it was most appropriate for the research to address participants that were “closer” to me in experience, age, and social relations. While this ascribes to a questionably unsound practice of “matching”<sup>1</sup> (see Bhavnani, 1994), I felt for consideration of power relations, it was most ethical. For example, I felt it would be unethical for me, a white American student with little experiential knowledge in the South African terrain and no knowledge of local languages such as Afrikaans or Xhosa, to drop myself into certain areas, specifically townships, and attempt to gather participants from Southern Africa. Firstly, I believed my ignorance would possibly lead to an “Othering”, either in the findings of this research or in the relationship between the participants and myself. The differences, in social and historical contexts and power relations, between our subjective positions would never ethically allow me to “speak” for these individuals. I did not wish to contribute to the gathering of knowledge whereby the “subjects” of that research, the severely oppressed people, marginalised by foreign status, language, class, and race, did not experience direct benefits from that research. Furthermore, in township areas, where the intimate knowledge of one’s neighbour is easily unearthed and anti-foreigner sentiments had previously erupted into violence, I felt it again would be unethical for me to seek out foreign citizens for my own research purposes, thereby exposing them to possible assault.

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<sup>1</sup> Bhavnani (1994) questions whether “matching” makes the data more “authentic”, but does agree that it is important to consider power relations in relation to subjectivities, such as race, age, gender, and class, in working with participants.

As such, I settled on binding this research study within the experiences of students of the University of Cape Town. I further limited the parameters of the research group by only seeking out students from the SADC region. I believed that most of the participants, from within the same region as South Africa, would have some knowledge of the country prior to their migration. Furthermore, under SADC policy, students from anywhere in the region can attend university for the cost of local fees. As such, students from this region can attend UCT at the same cost as their South African peers, not paying the international fees that can cost up to R55, 000 extra per year. According to the UCT International Academic Programmes Office, international students comprised 23% of those enrolled in 2008 (IAPO, 2010). Furthermore, in 2009, students from the SADC region encompassed 56% of the international student population at UCT, with 2,174 undergraduate and postgraduate students (IAPO, 2009). Their dominant presence within the international student population and the lesser financial burden of attendance made students from the SADC region a prime focus for this research.

However, binding this research within the parameters of international students from SADC at the University of Cape Town undoubtedly impacted the findings and results of this study. For example, transitioning to a new context through starting at a university is ultimately very different from migrations arising through economic need and job opportunities. Firstly, the participants themselves would be of a certain age of young adulthood and, predominantly, of a certain class. As UCT remains one of the elite academic institutions within Africa, the student body would by and large also represent the traditional seats of power, despite institutional attempts at diversity (particularly racial). However, as undergraduate students attending UCT, the participants may essentially represent the “elite” from their home countries – families with the financial capability to support students throughout their young lives so they may gain access to university and further afford to send them abroad for higher education. With few exceptions (one participant in particular described his personal struggle to pay university fees), the participants represented a certain economic class of foreign Africans.

I decided to interview both women and men for this research. While I am particularly

dedicated to focusing on the voices of women, making their experiences the source of knowledge, I felt to address my research aim, it was most appropriate to have mixed-gender focus groups. Firstly, in studying gender, I did not wish to further “ghettoize”, in some respects, the experiences of women. Men also have a gender and are also implicated within a patriarchal system. Studying their experiences simultaneously points to the ways in which men, as a dominant group within a hierarchy, reproduce masculinities and their authority in their interactions and discourses.

I planned to meet several international students at the orientation programme organised by the UCT International Academic Programmes Office (IAPO) from 25 January to 5 February. During the first three days of the orientation programme, students were invited to a series of informational sessions held at the Kramer Law Building in Middle Campus. Prior to the orientation, I contacted administrators at IAPO also inquiring if I could help during the two-week session with the aim of meeting students.

To gather participants, I knew I could not expect a representative sample - I simply sought to include those who wished to share their experiences with me and for this research. I also had few means to access such participants, and these were entirely available through my role as a student as well. As such, I sought to advertise the availability of this research project by engaging with and entering spaces where I knew such a sample of participants would be. On 25 January, I attended the first information session for international students, taking field notes on the different speakers and presentations. During the lunch break, students were invited to snack and mingle outside the lecture theatre. During this time, I met three students, two of which would join a focus group. I explained my research and chatted with them about their homes and their course of studies. Inevitably, they also asked about my own experiences as a foreign student at UCT and Cape Town. In particular, they wanted to know whether I felt I was safe or not in South Africa.

Part of my methodological approach was to ease the divisions between the researcher and the researched. I adopted a more “casual” approach, one could say, in conversations and

discussions with students; I asked questions about friends, family, studies, mixed with more direct, pertinent questions in reference to my research aims. As such, I also opened up spaces for the participants to ask questions of me directly. In this particular case, I realised that my own comments and remarks regarding safety and crime in South Africa would become part of their experience – I was an authority, in a sense, as I had been in South Africa for a year already. Especially in a period of transition, my comments could influence how they viewed the spaces around them. As I would in all my interactions with participants, I answered here succinctly but honestly, trying not to remove myself from a dialogue by being an “unapproachable researcher”.

That same afternoon (25 January), IAPO approached me with an opportunity to assist a medical aid scheme during the two-week orientation. I assumed that during this time I would still be able to meet and engage with international students for research purposes. After beginning this job on the Wednesday (27 January), I found this would not be possible. During the two weeks, I worked for Ingwe Medical Scheme for roughly 20 hours, but was not able to use this position to meet any other participants.

On Friday, 29 January, IAPO held a final welcome dinner for international students at the Molly Blackburn Hall on Upper Campus. During the welcome reception and dinner, I approached students, asking them if they were first-years and from the SADC region. If so, I explained my position as a researcher in the African Gender Institute and that I was conducting a series of focus groups with first-year students from the SADC region. As many students provided me with their contact information, I would again simply chat and ask some friendly questions to make them feel at ease and welcome.

While I had contact information for roughly 15 students through approaching them at IAPO events, I also decided to inquire about making announcements during first-year lecture classes. Searching through the online directory of UCT courses, I contacted the lecturers for classes in subjects ranging from Media and Society to Introduction to Economics. I did not focus on any particular discipline or field, but contacted all lecturers of first-year courses and requested to make a two-minute announcement at the beginning

or end of class. An overwhelming majority of lecturers agreed to allow me to come, and through e-mail, I arranged the dates and times most convenient to them.

I spoke at approximately a dozen lecture classes. During these announcements, I would explain my role and the participants I sought. During this announcement, I also revealed that I would be providing refreshments and pizza for the participants. At this point, students commonly asked whether South Africans could join, at which time I had to explain they could not – inevitably a groan of complaint would erupt in the lecture hall. I posted my personal e-mail address on the blackboard and asked that interested students e-mail me with their contact information.

At the same time, I contacted Moonira Khan, executive director at the Department of Student Affairs at UCT, through e-mail. I inquired about sending an e-mail to all international students or all first-year students. I was requested to present a complete description of my research, its aims, the content of the e-mail message to students, and which students in particular I was targeting. Khan approved the message, and, after speaking with employees of the Information & Communication Technology Services, the offices sent an e-mail to all postgraduate and undergraduate students at the university. This e-mail repeated the earlier announcements I had made in lecture halls – I explained my research and asked that any first-year students from the SADC region please e-mail me if they wished to participate.

Between the 15 students I originally spoke with, the dozen who contacted me through class announcements, and the nearly 100 e-mails I received, I coordinated focus groups for every Wednesday and Thursday at 17:00 from 11 February to 18 March. On one occasion, I cancelled a focus group because only one participant arrived. Many who had agreed to come did not show up. It was a complicated system of arranging possible participants into focus groups, seeking to have at least two participants in each session and no more than six. On one occasion, a participant brought two additional people to the focus group. This also resulted in many participants not fitting within the parameters of being in their “initial” moment of transition. I sought participants who had just arrived in

Cape Town, their first occasion of living in the new context of South Africa. However, many participants arrived who were in their second- or third-years at UCT or who had attended a South African high school prior to attending the university. As I was asking students to take time away from their schedules for the purposes of this study, I could neither request nor expect absolute attendance from anyone. Thus, I left up to chance, in terms of the variety of subjectivities and “categories”, the sampling of participants.

### **3.4.2 Pilot Test**

I e-mailed UCT and arranged to reserve room 5C at Kramer Law Building in Middle Campus. I had originally wanted to reserve a room either in one of the larger residence halls (Tugwell or Graça Machel) or in Lower Campus near many student residences. To make it convenient for students, I had wanted to hold the focus groups at a time when they would likely not be in classes and at a place close to their residences. Unfortunately, I was informed I would not be able to request a room in Lower Campus, and Kramer was the closest remaining option.

While I conducted seven focus groups in total, one of those was considered a pilot test. I did so to evaluate my selection of questions and my style as a facilitator. I came with a series of prepared questions and a plan to engage with participants in a manner based on my previous experiences as a newspaper journalist. The pilot focus group contained three participants, all from Harare, Zimbabwe.

Through this pilot, I was able to readjust my questions. For the final six focus groups, I asked fewer questions directly about the participants’ experiences in high school and their home life, instead, allowing those stories to come through more naturally. My first question became, “What had you heard about South Africa before moving here?”

Through this pilot, I decided this was a better initial question, as it immediately focused the participants’ experiences in this transition – knowledge of their new context while they were living in their former home countries. This compared with the pilot, where I asked numerous questions about their high schools, placing the focus of the interview on

a home context and not this transition. However, much valuable material managed to come through in the pilot, so I included it in my data, findings, and analysis.

### **3.4.3 The Focus Group – What Happened?**

When participants came to the focus group, I asked each person to sign-in with their full name, their country of origin, a contact number, and e-mail address. Participants were offered pizza and juice, and we would often chat and converse casually while waiting for others to join. Participants would fill out consent and confidentiality forms. Afterwards, I started the tape recorder and asked all the focus group members, including myself, to give their first names (or adopted pseudonyms) and their country of origin, before beginning the questions.

Firstly, I attempted and believed that I engaged with the participants and questions in an informal manner. The addition of pizza and juice and the location at a university lecture room added to this ambience. I wanted the participants to feel relaxed and comfortable in the setting. Most often, the focus groups began a bit uncomfortably, but participants would relax and begin joking with one another and answering more fully as the session progressed. I also felt, to create a more equitable relationship, I should add to the discussion, often providing my own stories and some details of my life in South Africa. I served more as a facilitator rather than researcher or interviewer. I would ask occasional direct questions, but most often interjected to include more participants in a discussion (“Did you also experience something similar?”), have the participant explain a comment more fully, or simply engage with the story as any good listener.

I used a semi-structured interview style – I brought notes and a list of some topics I wished to address. However, I would use the flow of the interview, the ideas and topics brought up by the participants, to address these. For example, I never asked first about crime in South Africa. Inevitably, in every focus group, crime was brought up, and through this, I would ask more direct questions about fear and spatialisation of crime. Similarly, I would rarely initially ask about xenophobic crime – only in two of the seven

focus groups was I the initiator of this topic. Instead, the majority (five of seven sessions), participants discussed this topic without any prompting. As such, the balance of power often remained within the group to dictate the topic of conversation and the flow of discussion.

At the end of every session, I also opened up the floor to anyone who had questions about my research or me. Often, following the “formal” focus group and after I had turned off the tape recorder, the participants and I would enjoy the pizza and juice and merely chat about a number of topics, usually regarding university life and oftentimes about my own home country, the United States. The participants had a wide range of questions about the U.S. and my experiences there and my move to South Africa, which I answered freely. Reinhartz (1992) suggest that the researcher providing some level of personal information both downplays status differences between “researcher” and “researched” and commits the researcher to a space of “true dialogue” (1992: 33). We would discuss topics such as the September 11 attacks, universities in the U.S., race in America and if everything was *really* “bigger in Texas,” as the unofficial state slogan claims. Many of the participants remarked afterward that they had really enjoyed the focus groups. Wisy, a first-year Namibian man, remarked:

**Wisy:** I just want to say thanks, we had a good session, you know. That was –

**Thabang:** Yeah, thank you.

**Wisy:** - you know, good to disengage from school, everything that’s happening and just think. Like meditation, you know.

After that particular focus group, the four participants exchanged e-mail addresses and phone numbers with one another.

In a study of transition and adjustment to the first-year of university in Australia, Katanis (2000) argues that although many students express adjustment issues in this transition – difficulties in making friends, trouble adjusting to the academic expectations of the university, among others – very few were willing to discuss their concerns with a university professional, such as a counsellor. Instead, she claims, “What students needed



was the opportunity to express concerns and vent frustrations rather than seeking expert counselling... In most cases it was moral support that was being sought” (Katanis, 2000). From Wisy’s comment and several other participants, I believe that for some who joined our focus groups, they found it beneficial to vent and discuss confusions and frustrations with other international students. They were able to take around an hour or two, enjoy some pizza and juice, and informally address the issues of adjustment they were facing. Furthermore, as Madriz (2003) argues, the participants were able to expose and validate each other’s experiences through discussions as a group.

### 3.5. Analysis

I transcribed the interviews myself and read them repeatedly for themes. As I explained in my research aims, I focused on the ways in which the participants embodied this transition. Through this lens – bodies, borders, contexts, change, and difference – I sought instances in which the South African context provided noteworthy change in how participants *felt* within the materiality of their bodies. “Feelings” has become a colloquialism for experiences of emotion (Jaggar, 1989). Furthermore, as Parrini (2007) laments in their methodology investigating the embodiment and migration of Mexican men to the U.S., one does not often discuss a body in terms of a “being-in-the-world”. My questions also did not ask about one’s experience with a body. Instead, I focused my analysis and presentation of findings on how the participants’ described their emotions and “feelings” in relation to their bodies and their embodied subjectivities within certain spaces.

The texture of this analysis became an interest in discourse and experience. As Mbilinyi argues, “One of the central concepts employed in critical feminism, derived from post-structuralist thought, is ‘discourse’, accompanied by the method of deconstruction” (1992: 37). Focusing on discourse, firstly, acknowledges the role of language in the distribution of power and authority within a context, as “language embodies a standpoint” (Eisenstein, 1988, as quoted in Mbilinyi, 1992: 37). Examining discourses and their deployment, I believe, is fundamental to deconstructing relations of power and subverting

constructed hierarchical categories.

However, my analysis and the construction of my findings are not solely limited to the discourses employed. I also organized my themes and analysed the experiences that the participants described, taken as “fact”. Discourses and power do not occur within a vacuum of the bodies that are implicated within and through them. Such relations are “socially constructed and deconstructed as a result of the behaviour of men and women themselves” (Mbilinyi, 1992: 49). As such, discourses *and* behaviour – performative bodies – may comply, rebel, or destabilise such categories. Therefore, I sought to examine the participants’ depiction of their behaviour as their bodies, rebellious bodies in certain spaces, may also serve to question and critique categories of oppression.

Organically, the themes arose around questions of how bodies are regulated. When I speak of body regulations, I am referring to predominantly the discursive techniques through which performances of gender, sexuality, and race (among others) are regulated and monitored in socio-cultural contexts. As highly specific as these contexts are, the migration across international borders brought the participants into new, uncertain “fields” (Bourdieu, 1990) where they had to learn how to navigate through without falling “on the wrong side of the normalising process” (Young, 2005: 19), or, if doing so, meting out its impact on access to resources and other bodily consequences.

Sometimes, these techniques of surveillance move beyond discourse into actions of violence, particularly against women and marginalised sexualities. Although Foucault (1977) contends that forms of social control and regulation has no need for violence, Deveaux (1996) critiques this as androcentric, failing to consider the systemic violence against women and its use (in the form of rape, sexual harassment, domestic violence) as a technique for social control. Additionally, I would include systemic violence against non-conforming sexualities. In this research study, a few participants noted street harassment in South Africa, specifically targeting women. Several also note violence against women and gay men in their home countries.

Under this umbrella, I found three major themes around which the participants own voices and comments describe the experience of transition and their embodiment of that migration – Feeling “Free”, Discourses of (In)Security, and Language and Foreign Bodies.

With these three themes in mind, I coded the data myself, seeking examples in both the content of the participants’ words and the way in which they employed discourses. As Jaggar (1989) contends, emotions, constructed within specific social and historical contexts, must be understood and explored through the discourse of that culture. These discourses and behaviours are often analysed contextually within specific spaces – the university, Main Road, Rondebosch, Cape Town, South Africa, the African continent – to engage with questions of how bodies cross borders and their compliance and subversion of subjectivities within regulations.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Introduction to Participants

The richly diverse experiences of students in their relation to South Africa and their “home” country complicated my own construction of “first-year, international students” when I came into this research space. Participants had a wide variety “homes” and “countries of origin” and relations to the South African context, much more so than I had originally anticipated. In addition, while they all claimed their country of origin from the Southern African Development Community (SADC), many had extensive living periods in countries outside of this zone, thus a multitude of “homes”. SADC is comprised of 15 countries, including Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Mauritius, Malawi, Mozambique, Madagascar, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

From 11 February to 18 March (approximately six weeks), I conducted seven focus group sessions with 23 participants. Each session had at least two participants and a maximum of six participants. The countries from which they report as their origin included Angola (1), Botswana (1), Swaziland (2), Mauritius (1), Namibia (8), Zambia (2), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2), and Zimbabwe (6).

Country of origin was the only piece of information I specifically requested from the participants. As such, the following information is culled and summarized from the focus group sessions. The information is all self-reported from the participant, thus it is taken as fact from their interviews.

Although I had originally advertised in my e-mail and in-person requests for participants that students be first-years, often this did not translate into who actually attended the focus groups. As such, two participants were in their second or third year at UCT, and a third had spent some time at the University of Witswatersrand in Johannesburg. My intention with requesting first-year students was to explore this initial moment of

transition – I had assumed that, in being a first-year student, participants would have little previous experience in South Africa. In the next section, I will explore how the participants' stories complicated my own construction of first-year students and their intricate relationships to South Africa. The remaining 20 participants were in their first year of study at the University of Cape Town, which began on 7 February 2010.

Although I did not specifically ask about ages during the interview, during the focus groups most participants revealed themselves to be roughly homogenous in age group. As all were undergraduate students, this was not terribly surprising. Participants ranged in age from 17 to 22, when they volunteered this information in the session.

I also did not specifically ask the participants to report their race, gender, or sexuality, or other “categories”. However, during the course of the interviews, this information came out naturally through the conversations. In total, 16 women and seven men participated; all were either black or coloured with the exception of one white woman and one Indian woman. When questioned about dating, all participants reported heterosexual orientations, with the exception of one gay man.

#### **4.2 Relationship to South Africa**

While I had originally intended on focusing on the initial moment of transition, these first two months after arriving in Cape Town, I found the participants' stories complicated my own expectation of international students' experiences. For example, the two participants from the DRC were sisters; one (Kim) had matriculated at Plumstead High School in Cape Town, attended UCT already for a year, while this was the first year at UCT for the younger sister (Zoe). Furthermore, while they were originally from DRC, they had both left that country when they were quite young for France, and had since lived in Paris for most of their lives. Another example, Sthabile, was originally from Zambia. Her family had moved to England soon after she was born, and then they relocated to Johannesburg in 1994 when she was five years old. In Johannesburg, she attended primary and high schools, and a period at the University of Witwatersrand, but often returned to England

and Zambia.

Most participants had not yet lived in South Africa, but had visited on holidays, for shopping, or had family members already in the country. Kudzai and Dorothy, both first-year women from Harare, Zimbabwe, describe their previous experiences in South Africa:

**Tessa:** Ok, so has anyone been to South Africa before?

**Kudzai:** I've been to South Africa before. Just, in general, to do shopping. Cross the border to Messina, Polokwane, Joburg. Go grocery shopping then go back home. So never on holiday or anything like that. Just shopping.

**Dorothy:** Yeah, same. Just shopping.

Many other participants reported visiting family members in South Africa or coming on holiday. Often, those family members who come before them served as a source of information about the country as they made their own transition here. Wisy, a male participant from Namibia, describes deciding where to attend university:

**Wisy:** ... And then my sister studied in Cape Town. And I asked her to compare like, you what, what she liked about Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban, and she's like, no, Cape Town is like a good vibe, like, it's like, um, old money, you know, it's not like all like, like, Johannesburg with all the gold, or like old money, it's like old, and like people meeting each other, and like the coast and obviously like the beach. You know it's like a really great place to come to. That's why I chose Cape Town.

Wisy's experiences also serve to exemplify this complicated terrain of relationships to South Africa, moments of transition, and the concept itself of the "initial experience". Wisy's mother is South African, so he travelled here every Christmas since 1996. He has also visited on holiday to the Northern Cape. Furthermore, Wisy spent a year in high school in Vancouver, Canada. As a result, he has often ventured across borders and through changing discourses; moving to Cape Town to university is hardly his first encounter.

Of the 23 participants, seven had actually lived in South Africa for some time. Again, the

idea of *living* in a place is still complicated. How long in one country or city does one have to stay and for what purpose? For example, Joanne from Mauritius had come to Cape Town the year before her studies for a 10-week photography course. She said:

**Joanne:** It was 10 weeks. It was just actually [unclear-good] living here and being on my own...

Joanne's mother is from Cape Town and her aunt lives here. As such, her family provided a support system that differs from other participants' accounts. Mthabisi, a male participant from Zimbabwe, moved to Johannesburg two years before starting at UCT to work and earn money for his university fees.

**Mthabisi:** You know crossing the border this side is, is quite something now to work for SA. I've work for one and a half years in Joburg to raise my fees to be here. So I worked hard to raise my fees and came here. So I've been living in Joburg...

These two experiences of "living" in a context show how variable the concept can be. Mthabisi had to navigate through Johannesburg on his own, locate employment and an apartment, compared with 10-weeks in a photography course for Joanne, who was coming here for a specific purpose and met by family on this end.

Four participants came to South Africa specifically for high school before taking on UCT; two reported that this decision was hinged on the necessity to learn English.

#### **4.3. Introduction to Analytical Framework:**

Following each interview, I would mark some themes or comments that related to the experience of bodies crossing borders. I transcribed the material myself, which also allowed me to listen again to the recordings and to familiarise myself with the participants and their use of discourses. I continued reading the transcripts, trying to organically cull themes that emerged between the lines.

My questioning had primarily tried to target ideas of differences. In embodying a migration across borders, what had my participants noticed of the differences between one side of the national boundary and the other? In studying migration, it is important to note that international borders are only one type of border crossing. Individuals cross borders everyday – in migration from the “private home” to the public street; neighbourhood and city borders; the silent school library to the loud common area. In South Africa, borders have a particular historical meaning through the Group Areas Act and the meaning of crossing borders from “White” neighbourhoods to “Black” areas. Individuals also negotiate boundaries of our own bodies and their intimate interactions with others. Most women face the monthly adaptation to a leaky menstruating body. Another example, two of my participants note the differences in bodily interactions in cultures:

**Kim:** For us, a hug is more like, it's too close, like you're really close than if you just give them a kiss. Cause when you give a kiss on the cheek, it's just both of your cheek, I don't know. But a hug, it's like really holding a person and for us, I, uh, up to now, I, I don't even.

**Zoe:** When they hug me, I'm like, “Uh, ok...”

**Kim:** I don't really like the hugging thing.

For these two sisters, who have spent most of their lives in France, they feel uncomfortable hugging friends, which is more common in South Africa. For them, their personal boundaries are crossed in these hugs, leaving them uneasy.

However, although everyone crosses some demarcations on a daily basis, I focused on the international borders where the concepts of boundaries, “foreignness”, and belonging take heightened meaning through legal regulations and discourses around the nation-state. Through my questioning about differences and experiences of change in the migration, negotiations through changing body regulations exploded in the focus groups.

In positioning the data under the umbrella of the experiences of bodily regulation, three themes predominantly emerged: Feeling ‘Free’: Loss of Regulation from ‘Home’; Discourses of (In)Security; and Language and Foreign Bodies. These categories or



themes relate in the way that bodies experience borders in terms of social and discursive regulation of their embodied selves on either side of the demarcation.

The three themes coalesce around the meaning of a body in a new space, that experience of transition and “foreignness”. Throughout each chapter, the meaning of South Africa itself, as a space receiving the participants in their migration, emerges. For my participants in this study, South Africa provides a context where their bodies feel freer, their bodies feel insecure, and their bodies feel “foreign”. Embodied experiences and the process of transition are intimately connected with the “new” space – that of South Africa, in this case. In truth, many of the themes bleed into one another. Metaphorically, it is interesting to see the ways in which bodies crossing borders complicates both the meaning of bodies and the meaning of these borders; and, in the same way, their experiences complicate the creation of demarcations between themes and ideas. For example, their identity as foreigners in the South African context of xenophobic violence heightens their sensitivity to fear of crime and notions of security. The overlapping and interrelated nature of these themes points to my own interpretation of the data and their unnatural constructedness.

## 5. Feeling ‘Free’: Loss of Regulation from ‘Home’

I titled this section “Feeling Free” somewhat tongue-in-cheek. In discussing discursive techniques of power and power relations, embodiment and regulation, undoubtedly one is never “free.”

In the case of the participants in this study, they often refer to “feeling free” in Cape Town in comparison to their homes. The participants express this sense of freedom in a multitude of ways and techniques. I have organised them in the following sub-categories: Normalising Judgements; Changing Expectations of Femininity; Changing Sexualities and Expectations of Performance; Classification and Restraints; and Labelling Home Spaces.

Again, through readings of the transcripts, I have constructed these sub-categories – they do not exist naturally. Specifically, I have tried to focus on the ways in which transition and migration point to the constructedness of gender and gendered expectations. Initially in beginning this project, I had assumed that migration would explode these categories. What the data showed was not necessarily an explosion, but a subtle sense that their gendered performances were not being regulated in the same manner; instead, they felt “free” of such regulations, ready for an opportunity to adopt new and less regulated subjectivities outside of the judgments of parents, family, society, and their countries as a whole. Of course, being in South Africa, in Cape Town, at UCT, their subjectivities were open to new forms of discursive power, but, in this initial moment, they were most acutely aware that earlier regulations remained at home. Consider this discussion:

**Sophie:** People are already like [says something in Afrikaans] [some others laugh], and they’re like, they’re so like rude, you know. So there, you’re not, you don’t say you’re gay, you know, it’s...

**Christy:** It hasn’t, it hasn’t actually-

**Ndayola:** There’s not a lot of tolerance

**Fabian:** Namibia’s very close-minded.

**Christy:** It hasn’t come to that point yet. We haven’t come to an openly gay –

**Ndayola:** Yeah, not really acceptable, yeah-

**Christy:** It’s not yet.

**Ndayola:** I can't imagine as an open gay, I mean, ah, if a gay club opened up, like-

This took place among a group of participants, all first-year students and all from Windhoek, Namibia. Within this vignette, many of the sub-categories that I will explore further emerge. Sophie's criticizing people in Namibia for their rude comments to gay men and the resulting silences; she's pointing to "home" regulation of sexualities and how these result in the invisibility of gay men. Ndayola also references invisibility – she would be shocked if a gay club were allowed to open in Windhoek, as such, no spaces exist for the performance of open homosexuality. Fabian engages in labelling Namibia as "close-minded"; this is in comparison to the "free" spaces of South Africa, where, in his mind, no one would make such "rude" comments. Referring to Namibia in such a way also serves to separate the participants from that space. While Namibia may be "close-minded", the participants are telling the focus group that they are not, they are accepting of the visible presence of gay men. Yet, lesbian women are never mentioned. Their invisibility persists in this setting. I will address this later in this section.

### 5.1 Normalising Judgements

In questioning participants about a *difference* between two contexts – that of their "home" and South Africa – both a description of their former, regulated spaces, and this new "free" space emerged. In considering bodies in transition, I would first like to point to the ways in which participants described controlling regulations and normalising judgements in their former contexts.

**Noelene:** Cause when you are home, if I want to walk wearing maybe pajamas, maybe I would be arrested for, you know, something that really, I'm doing something stupid. Maybe I'm trying to be funny for no apparent reason.

**Wandile:** Maybe they would take you to the psychiatric centre-

**Noelene:** Maybe, I would be taken to the psychiatric ward because they think I'm starting to go mad. But like here, you can walk in pajamas, or walk barefoot 8 to 6 o'clock barefoot. And no one will ask you.

Noelene, a Zimbabwean woman, and Wandile, a Swazi man, had been discussing how

students dress at UCT – pajamas, nightdresses, bare feet – and no one seems to mind or comment. They compare that to their home countries, where dressing in such clothing during the middle of the day would result in severe penalties. Here, the punishment is not subtle – Noelene contends that such behaviour would result in either legal or psychiatric attention. The punishment, in this case, results from a spatial infraction – the problem is not wearing pajama pants so much as wearing them in *public*. In discussing something as innocuous as pajama pants, the consensus between the two participants and the harshness of the punishment is worth nothing. Their respective homes are both spaces in which “doing something stupid” enacts a reaction from police and psychiatric services.

However, most forms of normalising judgements do not employ such harsh punishment as removal from public space and incarceration in psychiatric units. Instead, oftentimes reminders are presented to individuals of the deviance in their behaviour in the forms of stares, small comments, laughs, pointing, and social exclusion.

**Zina:** It’s really judgemental, that’s the problem.

**Ndayola:** Yeah, you can’t be an individual or they judge, noooo...

**Zina:** You can’t be an individual. Like, you have to, you have to-

**Ndayola:** You can’t be an individual.

**Tuli:** When we go there now, people look at us like-

**Fabian:** Because, Tessa-

**Zina:** We look so different to everyone.

**Fabian:** I think cause it’s so small. Like societal norms, like you have to conform to.

**[Agreeing from the group]**

**Ndayola:** Yeah, that’s true.

**[.....]**

**Ndayola:** Yeah, it’s hard to be an individual.

**Christy:** It’s hard cause if you don’t dress, then-

**Ndayola:** Then you are that girl, exactly.

**Christy:** Then you feel all the eyes on you.

**Tuli:** And they think you’re crazy.

**[Agreeing]**

**Tuli:** And they don’t want to mix with you.

Here, there is group consensus that being an “individual” in Namibia results in social punishment. Being a body unlike other bodies, dressing differently, or acting differently,

is deviant behaviour. In this section, the participants note the “norm” and its corresponding deviance, the methods of monitoring, and the techniques of punishment.

The participants report that Namibians, in general, must dress alike. Again, clothes become the most noted form of social conformity. Participants (and sisters) Tuli and Zina report that they dress differently from most Namibians; they dress as “individuals”. Their behaviour is monitored easily because “it’s so small.” Everyone knows everyone else, and someone is always watching. Through this method, their “individual” dress is monitored and punishment (and power) is meted out. As a result, the “eyes [are] on you”; you are “crazy”; and, “they don’t want to mix with you.” Through these stares, constant observation, the individual realises his or her behaviour as deviant. The deviant behaviour is therefore the result of someone “crazy” – their mental capacity, their rationality, is questioned, disempowering them as existential subjects. Furthermore, society excludes them, stigmatised by their rebellion of social norms of dress.

Again, these normalising judgements are located in the particular space of Namibia, in contrast to the “free” South Africa. Within the focus group interviews, and undoubtedly outside in their respective social spheres, participants recreate images of their “home” countries, which are marked by heavy depictions of regulation and judgment. Perhaps in the migration and transition from spaces, through a perception of the *differences* in contexts, the regulations monitoring one’s body in a context become more apparent. Regardless, this transition provides an opportunity for participants to recreate the home, construct visions of a terrain and contexts characterized by the “constant eyes” of friends, family, and society that judge and demean “being an individual”. In contrast to scenes of difference, diversity, and “freedom” in South Africa, the “home” in this transition is one of homogeneity.

## **5.2 Changing Expectations of Femininity**

Newly established at UCT and Cape Town, female participants largely report feeling released from the expectations of respectable femininity of their homes, where such

transgression could result in violence and stigma. While all individuals face normalising judgements of their respectability, these are highly gendered. In this section, I will use the data to demonstrate the ways in which participants describe their “release” of such expectations and the transformation of feminine performances.

Wandile, a first-year female student from Swaziland, noted how she had a “voice” for the first time in her interactions at UCT. Her experiences in particular illuminate this idea of freedom from previous expectations. Participants report a loss of home regulations, and instead adopt new subjectivities that they have agency in creating through their positions as students. The new context provides a space and opportunity for transformed feminine performances, that perhaps are no less regulated than those in participants’ former contexts. Perhaps then, the notion of “feeling free” is a misnomer; participants’ sense of “freedom” in South Africa in regards to their gendered performances is instead a combination of the discourses of liberalism within a university context and the feeling of becoming an agent in *creating* discursive regulations.

I will start with Wandile, who provides the quintessential example of the feelings of freedom experienced when moving “outside” familiar systems of social control and gendered expectations:

**Wandile:** But the one thing that has been huge for me since I’ve been here is that I have a voice here. In Swaziland, I don’t have a voice. As an.... in Swaziland, as a woman, expressing my views, like, people don’t really want ... I mean, as to ... we don’t have freedom of speech in Swaziland, for example. Freedom of association, we do have it, but they don’t want equalities and things like that. But the first thing that I noticed here was that people are actually willing to hear my opinion. [...] They’re like, “This is South Africa. You must feel free to speak whatever you want to say,” and in Swaziland... you’re very constrained with things like that. So that’s the first thing, I was like “Wow!” I get to express myself and it’s like, it doesn’t matter, like, it’s OK to be myself and express myself, and it’s been three weeks, but I already feel that vibe.

For Wandile, her voice is completely discounted in her home country. In the transition to South Africa, she has found a context where, as a woman, she is more than allowed to have a voice, she is encouraged to speak. Wandile also explicitly ties this expectation to

the nation-state of Swaziland, where, according to her, one does not have freedom of speech. She attributes her sense of freedom in the ability to speak as intricately tied to the demarcation of borders between the two countries and the rights bestowed to those on either side. Although she originally attributes this feeling to her gendered body (“as a woman”), in tying it to ideas of *human* rights (“We don’t have freedom of speech”), she is attempting to de-gender this feeling of freedom. She is indicating that no Swazis, regardless of gender, have real freedom of speech. However, later in this quote, Wandile again reiterates what a voice means for her as a woman:

**Wandile:** [...] Which in Swaziland is huge. Everything you say, you have to account for. And, especially when you’re a girl, it’s even worse. It’s like, “Does your husband know,” - if I was married, for example - “that you are saying these things?” And things like that. So, yes, they do say that we are equal. But it’s still that, you still have to refer everything to the man. And everything, yeah. So that’s the first thing that really hit me hard.

As such, Wandile reports that women in Swaziland are expected to be voiceless – men contribute to public discourse. Women’s voices are funnelled through their relationships to men – namely, either the husband or the father. Here in South Africa, without a husband or a father or the context of Swazi social expectations, Wandile not only has a “voice” in the sense that she is free to speak, but a “voice” to contribute to the production of discourse. This discourse, in the specific context of the university, reiterates this expectation of a “free” and liberalised space. Perhaps Wandile’s sense of voice is also a comment on how, within the context of the university and South Africa, she has now become a subject in the cyclical reproduction of bodily regulations through discourse, rather than a voiceless object of them.

Again, more explicitly than other students, Wandile also notes how the migration to South Africa and, in particular, the new context, offers her new opportunities for dating that she would not been exposed to back home.

**Wandile:** Cause, it’s like in Swaziland, [...] boys just stayed away from me cause they knew that she’s gonna probably give me a political speech about something. [All laugh] She wants a position somewhere, things like that. So guys didn’t

approach me. [...] Even now, people still have this perception, oh she wants a position somewhere, so she's not interested in dating and everything. So I've... so, I've accepted the fact that I probably won't date again. [She laughs] Cause like all of them are convinced that I just want to get a position somewhere or what. Just do something concerning work and... And then I come here. [...] So it's like, I'm probably going to get more dates in Cape Town than I ever will in Swaziland. I'll probably get more here than in Swaziland cause I already have a like a list of people calling, and things like that. In Swaziland, no one is interested.

Peers viewed her as un-dateable back home because of her ambition, drive, and refusal to not give “a political speech about something.” These perceived qualities were incongruent with the expectations of femininity in Swaziland; as a result, Wandile was de-sexualized by her peers. In the Cape Town context, Wandile's academic drive and ambition is not an inhibiting factor for the expression of her heterosexuality. Perhaps because of the context of a university, perceived and promoted as an “elite” institution, ambition and academic drive are not seen as “un-feminine” and thus de-sexualizing to women. The new field provides many opportunities for heterosexual relations; a subject position that also affords her new social standing in a hierarchy of sexual expression.

However, unlike her previous comments regarding feminine behaviour, Wandile does not possess authority or agency in either field. She positions her sexuality, in both contexts, in terms of how men are attracted to her; at home, the “boys stayed away,” while in Cape Town, “a list of people [are] calling.” Wandile is never in a position of action, only as object of heterosexual desire. In fact, when questioned about dating, the participants always operated under compulsory heterosexuality and under the traditional heterosexual scripts of men as the aggressor and women as the passive figures in dating. For example:

**Joanne:** [...] Here I think it's more like guys don't really like ... come to you while you're dancing or just dance with you and kiss you. They will be like, they must talk to you first and then... uh... Yeah, they'll ask for your phone number.

Other participants were not so explicit in their explanations of the transition of their embodied gender and the expectations of their performance. Most students, instead, refer to the ways in which “acceptable” behaviour of women in South Africa would be severely punished, often in violent ways, in their home countries. Unlike Wandile, these



participants do not adopt the subject position of such new gendered expectations. Instead, they offer hypothetical situations that position themselves as separate from this freedom, although noting it; this perhaps demonstrates their hesitance in themselves taking on new “freedoms” in the South African context. This exposes the uncertainty of transition and migration in regards to gendered expectations. While the participants acknowledge how their bodies are no longer regulated under the same power structures as home, largely they have yet to take agency within these new subject positions or adopt the new expectations of gender. For example;

**Kudzai:** I think the difference is that in Zim you’re dressing... just the way you dress says something about you. So if you’re dressed in short things, you’re portraying yourself as a slut and all that. But here, it’s just because it’s hot, people are wearing shorts. Just normal. So that’s a big difference we see a lot. So I think that if I take this person and put them in Zimbabwe, they’d be stoned to death.

**Dorothy:** Yeah, they can’t walk down the road. They’d be...

**Kudzai:** Yeah, guys would look at her and whistle. At times in town, if you’re wearing something really short they’ll just rip it off you and say, “If you want to walk undressed, then just don’t dress.” So they’d rip it off you.

In this focus group, all three students came from Harare, Zimbabwe, and agreed on how the clothing in Cape Town shocked them and would be inappropriate in their home country. In fact, throughout all the interviews, the most consensus occurred around this issue; the oftentimes-violent punishment for transgressions of respectable femininity in public, specifically on how women dress and how much skin they reveal.

The social transgression in these cases is almost singularly women’s style of dress (revealing clothing, short skirts) within public spaces. However, the mode of punishments reported range from stares and muffled comments to physical violence, attacks, and death.

**Christy:** You won’t like, we’re not so, it’s just so - you won’t really go there like in your bikini and your g-string. [Laughs]

**Zina:** Or a thong.

**Christy:** Bikini, and be walking around the beach.

**Sophie:** People will rob them.

[Some laughs]

And:

**Wandile:** Cause like, in Swaziland, you can never parade in a miniskirt in broad daylight in the public.

**Tessa:** Oh, miniskirts, yeah.

**Wandile:** Yeah. People would be raising those eyebrows and you maybe sexually assaulted or something like that. But-

Revealing clothing, in their former contexts, is explicitly forbidden. The perpetrators of sexual violence (thus, those who mete out punishment for social transgressions) are often assumed as men. Men, within the participants' home countries, whistle, harass, and assault women violating respectable feminine behaviour in their dress. However, the participants' comments hint at how all members of society are complicit in the monitoring and regulation of women's bodies. For example, those raised eyebrows Wandile (a male Swazi student) refer to have no implicit gender. In addition, Dorothy from Zimbabwe describes her first day at UCT:

**Dorothy:** Even like my first day here, like the way people dress here, it's just, for me, like, back home it's like you'd stop and be like, "This girl is walking around and she is dressed like that." It's like, ah.

Dorothy alludes how she would be making comments regarding "inappropriate" garb in her home country. The assumption then is that all subjects within a society, regardless of identity and their own experience of bodily regulation, practice discipline. As Foucault (1977) recalls, the position in the Panopticon tower is almost paradoxically both a privileged space and a democratic one; privileged, as it exerts power over those it observes, but democratic as all subjects have access to the monitoring and regulation of social bodies in everyday interactions. As this tower is both a position of authority and power, it begs the question whether the process of social citizenship, the adoption of contextually based subjectivities, includes taking up the role of monitor, positioning oneself at some point or another within the Panopticon tower and participating in surveillance. Moreover, to what degree is the adoption of subjectivities, social citizenship, and employing power within a group identity hinged on participation in this

role? Does one judge others to “fit in”?

Instead, Dorothy finds herself at UCT where this “rebellious” clothing is common and no others are whistling, making comments, or assaulting the many female students wearing short skirts, bright colours, and revealing tops. This is not “free” of judgements, notions of respectable femininity, but a new field of discursively reproduced expectations and “liberal” bodily performances. A later section in this chapter will examine the negotiations of old expectations in the new field and the conflict of adopting new models of gendered subjectivities.

### 5.3 Changing Sexualities and Expectations of Performance

This section will examine how many participants remarked on the public performance of marginalised sexualities, namely the visibility of gay men in Cape Town, in contrast with the performance of sexualities in their home countries. I will also touch on the new expectations of sexuality and its performance in the context of the university.

More than half (four of the seven) focus groups noted the visibility of marginalised sexualities in Cape Town in contrast to their complete invisibility in their home countries. For example:

**Kudzai:** You can just pick them out because we don’t see it at home. You don’t. If there are gay people, we don’t see them. We don’t see them walking in the street dressed the way they would dressed if they were here. So it’s still obvious to see that this person is gay, that person is gay, because they’re not shy to be who they are. But in our country, if you are gay, you hide it. So no one ever sees a person in the street and says, “That person is gay.” It’s really, really ... I think it eventually I’ll get used to it, but it’s a bit shocking to see people out in the open like that.

**Patrick:** But at the same time, I think it’s a nice kind of shocking. It’s cool to see that people can be who they want to be. It’s cool in a strange way.

In this focus group, where all three participants were from Harare, Zimbabwe, a consensus formed in discussing the greater visibility of gay men in Cape Town in

comparison to home. Again, the source of anxiety is the sudden presence of a *public* performance of homosexuality; whereas participants were shocked at the revealing clothing of women in public in Cape Town, they are similarly shocked that gay men perform their sexuality in a *visible* and *public* way. Kudzai can “pick them out” directly because of their invisibility at home.

The shock is perhaps also a result of seemingly nonchalant reception of homosexual performances. Kudzai alludes to the oftentimes violent reactions of others when an openly gay person performs this sexuality in public (in contrast with the expectations of the performance of heterosexuality, also regulated most commonly to the private domain). Kudzai notes the “performativity” (Butler, 1990) of homosexuality in relation to a specific dress and walk. It is a “different” figure in the street, compared against the hegemonic performance of heterosexuality, which remains invisible as it is assumed the standard and “norm” in which the figure of the “gay people” are compared.

In discussing performativity of sexuality (whether heterosexual, homosexual or variances among), participants also noted the ways in which they “spotted” gay men in this “free” space. Only one participant commented she had seen “articulations of sexuality” (Valentine, 1996) in observing two women kissing. Otherwise, participants observed other “markers” of homosexuality in clothes and walk:

**Joanne:** [...] Here, people. Say they just like... show it. Well, you see. You see like the ... the little walk [...]

Participants perceived that the context of Cape Town allowed for the visible presence of sexualities that their home countries rendered invisible through the thorough regulations that dictate the performance of respectable sexualities, namely heterosexuality. At home, bodies that perform marginalised sexualities were removed from public sight.

When noting the new visible presence, participants employ references to the “freedom” in the Cape Town and/or UCT context. Here, “People can be who they want to be,” as Patrick notes in describing why the newly observed visibility is “nice.” Other students

echo similar sentiments:

**Wandile:** And then here, it's just so free, they tell you and everything.

And:

**Noelene:** I - You see gay people everywhere. You see gay [unclear]. You see lesbians kissing. You see all, all of that is happening here. So you see it because – and no one asks them or, you know. They're just doing it because they're expressing themselves and all that stuff. Yeah.

The new field or context is coded as one where traditionally marginalised sexualities are “free” to “express themselves” through the public performance of their sexuality. Parts of the newfound freedoms are not necessarily ones that most of the students participate in (as they described themselves as heterosexual), but note a context of visibility and “open” spaces for typically marginalised bodies. Two participants noted how they had heard Cape Town was more “accepting” of variant sexualities:

**Prashila:** Well, I haven't actually noticed it a lot. I think I might have suspected like one or two people [both start laughing]. Besides that, I haven't noticed a lot of.... so.

**Sthabile:** Yeah, I think, um, it kind of makes you aware when people talk a lot...

**Prashila:** -talk about it.

**Sthabile:** Like, if I were in say San Francisco now, I would be looking for.... well, you know. But um, yeah, there are always gay people everywhere.

**Tessa:** Yeah, yeah.

**Sthabile:** Yeah, so it's not much different but the fact that they are naming it that you would-

**Prashila:** Keep a lookout.

**Sthabile:** Yeah, keep a lookout.

The discourse surrounding the Cape Town context perhaps is one that perpetuates the idea that this space is “free” in comparison with most African contexts. As a result, the participants, in this initial moment, are on the “lookout” for evidence of this; they also serve in the production and reproduction of the discourse of Cape Town as a “free” space.

Only one participant, Fabian of Namibia, was gay. His comments echo many of his peers

in noting the presence of other gay men in Cape Town, the increased visibility of variant sexualities in public spaces, and the sense of greater personal freedom in expressing his own sexuality.

**Fabian:** There's no gay clubs in Namibia. So you have to go to like normal clubs, which is like very difficult, um. But I didn't actually go out in Namibia, only in South Africa, cause it's, it's, it's non-existent in Namibia. And in Cape Town, it's like gay heaven, so- [...]

In a discussion about going out to clubs and bars at night in Cape Town, Fabian added that he was excited about the presence of gay clubs. In comparison to Namibia – where he refers to gay visibility as “non-existent” – Cape Town offers specific spaces for the articulation of homosexuality not offered in his home country. The participants predominantly do seem to note a change in the embodiment of marginalised sexualities. Body techniques that are typically read as “gay” (Kudzai's reference to dress and Joanne's comment on a walk) are regulated out of public performances within home contexts. In Cape Town, while the hegemony of heterosexual spaces persists, participants describe how the regulation of marginalised sexualities is simply not as fierce, the techniques of discipline not as harsh, and the punishment not as violent.

It is important to explore two points further. First, while the participants are describing public Cape Town streets, the presence of a few clubs and beaches, their lives in South Africa largely centre on the university. My relationship and engagement with them is through this context, as is their engagement with the country. As negotiations of sexuality and performances are inextricably linked to the spaces in which they are deployed, the university context is unique in its engagement with these bodies. Within the larger context of South Africa and the African continent, homosexuality is still largely condemned, often in violent ways (Reid and Dirsuweit, 2002; Horn, 2006). Importantly, for subverting stereotypes of the “homogenous homophobic Africa”, it is important to note these *African* students resisting homophobic sentiments and instead deploying discourses of acceptance and welcomed freedom in a variety of performances. Secondly, for also subverting the stereotype of South African exceptionalism in regards to its relative legislative “acceptance” of homosexuality, violent homophobic attacks toward

individuals of non-conforming sexualities occur within the country and also within the perceived “free” and accepting space of Cape Town.

However, this does lead to the next point in that, despite their words of acceptance and the visibility of gay men, few mention other marginalised sexualities, mostly notably lesbian women. The only mention is of either their invisibility or Noelene’s comment of seeing women kiss. I will expound just briefly from Joanne’s own words:

**Joanne:** I haven’t seen lots of lesbians or recognise them. More people like gay boys.

In discussing the open performance of variant sexualities and subverting normative heterosexuality, participants’ discourses on “feeling free” and increasingly liberal notions of acceptability has focused on the idea of the production on the part of the subject. Joanne’s comment points to the more complicated terrain of the reception and perception of alternative sexualities. Why does the performance of lesbian sexuality render it invisible to perception? On the other hand, is the production not as “free” as participants contend it is for the gay man?

However, in summary, the participants note how regulations of sexuality result in the increased visibility of gay men and the creation of specific spaces for the open performances of these sexualities. Within this field, perceived to be “accepting” of variant sexualities, bodies marked by (specifically gay male) marginalised sexuality face diminished discipline.

#### **5.4 Classification and Restraints**

While the previous two sections focused on the gendered regulations of bodies and the participants’ experiences of difference, the next two sections will focus on the methods and techniques of disciplinary regimes and the discursive tactics employed to disassociate the subject from such regimes. In this section, I will explore how students describe the

systems of disciplinary techniques in their home countries (classification) and how they negotiate their bodily performances from the former techniques within the new contexts.

Participants note how certain bodily markers are used to regulate and classify individuals in their home contexts. For example:

**Joanne:** You go to this party and like you see everybody, like sees you too, what you wear. You get to know everybody's surname. That's very important in Mauritius. Here, I don't know. Like you can meet someone and like, hey I'm Jo, I'm Sarah or anything. In Mauriutus, it's like I'm Joanne Le -----. The whole [unclear] name or double-barrel name. They'll situate you before they even know you. [...] Yeah, they are very like conscious about that. Like, they'll situate into like different.... how do you say that? .... Like Indian people, like Indian surnames, Creole, [unclear-black] people.... It's very... I don't like it. They classify people.

Markers, in this case, of surnames (really, a reflection of race in Mauritius, according to Joanne) and clothes situate individuals among a hierarchy of social acceptance and respectability. Foucault (1977) notes this technique in the deployment of surveillance and power as for its obsessive focus on details – in Joanne's case in Mauritius, a focus on clothes, surnames, and race. These can also be viewed as indicators of social status through class and race that Joanne reports, “classify people” within her home society. Furthermore, the people are “very conscious” of where they are “situated” within this hierarchy – they note other surnames and the symbolism embedded within them as to where they fit along a spectrum of respectability.

In the same focus group, Wandile reports a similar example in Swaziland where the clothes one wears are evaluated and, sometimes, mark an individual:

**Wandile:** And I mean not to say that people don't dress like that in Swaziland, they do do it. But they are already... they are given... names already.

**Joanne:** They put them in a box in Mauritius....

**Wandile:** They put them in a box.

What Joanne and Wandile term a “box”, Foucault (1977) contends are these “cells” used



to compartmentalise individuals within a hierarchal structure set on normalisation. These normalising processes are exactly what the participants feel “free” of in their transition to Cape Town. Again, not that they have disappeared and that the participants are necessarily free of hierarchies and discipline (the university context perhaps presents a whole new set of rules), but that the system, expectations, rules, and techniques once felt have been left at home. What does it mean to “put them in a box”? As the two participants indicate, bodies in their home countries are marked, through clothes, surnames, among others, and ranked accordingly. Being “in a box” perhaps also reflects on an individual’s inability to extricate oneself from these classifications. Perhaps in a transition one feels unburdened from the “box”.

The result is a mixture of feelings reported from the participants, from some discomfort and confusion, shock, to relief and ease.

**Patrick:** It’s different. I think it’s a nice kind of different to see that people can do what they want and they’re not judged for the way they dress and how they present themselves.

And:

**Noelene:** And I think people here do that because no one cares about what you do and no ones going to ask you. And so, it’s just so, it’s just a platform where you can be who you are and what you want. And what you want to be, what you really are, without anyone really questioning you.

And:

**Prashila:** So yeah, here it’s just more open, everything’s just way more open. Yeah.

In the third quote, Prashila is discussing the open way in which her peers at UCT discuss their dating lives in a manner that would not be acceptable at home. The two former participants both are referring to the manners of dress and style in Cape Town and UCT. Most participants expressed a measure of discomfort with this newfound “freedom”. Prashila had also mentioned earlier her uncertainty with dating at UCT, coming from,

what she called, a more conservative Hindu community in Zimbabwe. The clothes and subsequent lack of judgment also shocks the participants, but many conciliated that with a feeling of pleasant surprise. Most interestingly, many participants found a correlation between, on one hand, the freedom in coming into this new context and being challenged by the bodily performances around them, and, on the other, the process of independence and moving into adulthood. For example:

**Joanne:** I think it's maybe that differences, it shocks you. Like, become yourself really. Like you don't have all the constraint things you did.

And:

**Prashila:** It makes you think that you know, you, at home, back home, you're so closed up in your own little environment and you think that everybody in the world is going to be conservative and not say anything to you. It makes you actually open your mind up a bit, there are people like that, who do that, and say things like that, yeah.

This begs the question of whether the experiences described here, as being free and without constraint, are a result of the context of Cape Town and UCT or the experience of all individuals leaving home for the first time and away from parents? Undoubtedly, the sudden process of having any number of choices – classes at university, clothes to wear, styles to adopt, unlimited access to bars, clubs, dates, etc – also could bring on the shock, relief, insecurity, and sense of openness the participants largely attribute to the specific space (Cape Town, UCT) rather than the situation (leaving home).

So what do the participants do with this newfound sense of freedom? Instead of positing participants bodies as mere sights of domination, pulled through the techniques of discipline, what instead is their agency in this new context, their being in this new world? Participants amend these performances through their understanding of both their old and new contexts. For example:

**Noelene:** And besides, you should be unique. And have you be you, not just change because we're in Cape Town. And cause you, like, you'll get yourself into trouble. Because you'll start doing things that you've never done before. And I

can imagine people calling my dad and mom. It's like, "She was drunk. She's now in the hospital because she hit her head." "What?!" That's, they would fly in a second here. So, it's just –

Noelene is responding to a question of whether or not she will embrace the "new freedoms" she has witnessed in Cape Town – drinking, smoking, parties, etc. Moving in spaces viewed as more "free" does not remove an embodied individual completely from their previous locations. As Diprose describes, bodies are inscribed through "sets of habits" (1994: 18), repeated acts reinforced through discourses that individuals contribute, repeat, and react to. It seems as though the changing contexts also interrupts these habits, throwing the participants into a complex and perhaps anxious state of negotiating through a new field of discourses. The "freedom" comes at the cost of a possibly confusing adaptation.

For example, Wandile, a Swazi man, and Noelene, a Zimbabwean woman, both first year students, discussed the confrontation with new freedoms and the social mores of their homes:

**Wandile:** It's like this: When you're coming to, uh, from, when you're coming from Swaziland to a place in another country to study in another country. You can do what you want, and some people do what they like. So it's not like all of us are doing the same thing. If somebody's smoking, feels like smoking or drinking, he can do it. So it depends on him.

**Noelene:** Yeah.

**Wandile:** But at home, some of them, we're not doing this. But they're doing it here, because there's a lot of freedoms, some of them.

**Noelene:** Yeah, yeah. True. Some people, it's not like all of the people from home. They're going to, they're going to be reserved or all that stuff. Some of them are just going to start doing some hectic stuff. Just depends on the individual.

Noelene interestingly refers to rebuffing the choice to smoke and drink in Cape Town as "reserved", but yet a normal course of action at home. This exemplifies the contradictions and complexities for the participants in the transition; their actions take on new meanings in this context. Smoking and drinking, which at home could be seen as unacceptable and result in social discipline, could become the order of the day, if they so choose. Noelene

and Wandile have perceived that not only are other students joining in these activities, but also the discourses around them have altered to recreate their meanings in Cape Town. As a result, the “respectable” woman in Zimbabwe is labelled “reserved” in this new field. In addition, later:

**Tessa:** Well, you guys have both started to talk about how there is so much freedom here, but why haven’t – why not – why haven’t you guys joined the free for all?

**Noelene:** Me. It’s not me. Like, it’s just not me, and some of these things you just... And, do you know like, um, whatever what we do or what we want to be or what we try to do, what has been ingrained in us, we can’t take it out. Like, they’re just some things that we were taught when we were growing up, like those, you know, the culture, the culture that we have. We have it, we might try to change it here, but it will always be in us. So, it’s sometimes, it occupies a greater part of us. So, as for me, I don’t like the fun that goes here, goes on here.

Noelene attributes her hesitancy and eventual rejection of these new freedoms to an ingrained culture. She exposes how the habits of the subject are never fully removed from systems of discipline – a sense of never being fully free. The individual brings former social mores and normalising judgments into the new space. Additionally, former meanings behind actions (the social meaning of drinking, smoking, going to parties) confront new expectations of social citizenship in which those actions perhaps take on new significance. While a classifications system imbues these social mores within the embodied individual, a subject still exerts agency in deciding what “freedoms” they will or will not engage. In Bourdieu’s (1990) argument, the subject profits from a knowledge of the “field” and determines a course of actions through a weighing of capital – social, economic, among others. Essentially, participants, in coming to understand the changing significance of their actions (these “freedoms”), negotiate their actions through an estimation of its worth; for example, whether going out to drink will allow them to make new friends versus hurt their academic standing.

As Wandile (the male student in the same focus group as Noelene) says, it “just depends on the individual.” Their negotiation of new and old meanings, systems of discipline, and habits entering a new field is not as simple as narratives of the body as objects of discursive domination. The participants’ negotiation through these contradictions exposes

how bodies moderate forms of power (in their spurning of new “freedoms”) and are complicit in reproducing them. The reproduction is seen through their bodily performance in not adapting to new styles and fashions, rejecting social drinking and smoking, and replicating normalising gazes on the street of the bodies that do not “fit” their former fields. These are reproduction of their former regulations, classifications, and forms of power – participants’ behaviours convey meanings of the “home” within their new field.

Counter to Noelene’s admission that she will stay “reserved” in Cape Town, Wandile of Swaziland (female student) says employing old standards in her new context would make her feel “constrained”:

**Tessa: Like the clothes that... how do you feel in the clothes that you would wear in like Swaziland or Mauritius here...?**

**Wandile:** Feel like, why constrain yourself?

**Tessa: You feel like you are constraining yourself?**

**Wandile:** I am constraining myself. You want to wear all of... you can wear whatever you want to wear here, and it’s ok. People accept it, and things like that.

**Tessa: What happens when you wear like, something that would have been looked down upon in Swaziland, what happens when you wear them here? How do you feel?**

**Wandile:** Like, if I wear something in Swaziland that wouldn’t be accepted, I wear it here, no one cares. It’s like...

**Joanne:** Ohh...

**Wandile:** It’s like whatever.

Wandile’s agency is subtler in this new context as she is not challenging local mores but adopting new styles in contradiction to the expectations and disciplinary systems of home. Her subversion is not perceived at UCT – she is not a challenge to those around her, but those she cannot see and who cannot see her; she espouses new meanings to her former styles in that they “constrain” her. As Wandile also accepts the changing meaning of these clothes and styles, she is very eager to adopt the new “freedoms” she sees her peers engaging in. Wandile rebels only in her production, perhaps only she is aware of it. Because here, “no one cares”; there is no immediate sense of the disciplinary forces that would stigmatise those actions and styles.

## 5.5 Labelling Home Spaces

This final section will examine the techniques many participants employed in labelling their home spaces as locations of fewer “freedoms” and, in doing so, discursively disassociated themselves from that space. I will question whether participants employ this technique to promote their selves as “modern” individuals, thus seeking access to power and status in the hierarchal social structure of the university and its standards of respectability.

Of the four focus group session that heavily discussed the feeling of freedom in Cape Town, all of them engaged in a process of labelling their home countries in a manner that reflected their perception that their former context lacked such freedoms. Several participants also told stories that supported their labels. I contend that the technique of labelling and sharing stories that portray home countries as “homophobic”, “small”, “judgemental”, among others, is part of a discursive process of, firstly, setting oneself apart from those labels, and two, telling peers within the focus group context that the individual rejects these values. Such narratives are part of the ongoing process in transition of adopting new subjectivities within this context, which perhaps espouses discourses of “liberalism” and acceptance of “Western” values. For example:

**Wandile:** So, being ... Swaziland is very homophobic. Very, very homophobic. We do have a lot of gay guys, but you know they always tell you that it's tough being gay in Swaziland, it's really tough. I can't imagine anyone just saying it openly, “I'm gay.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Full quote reads: **Wandile:** Yeah, if we do some [unclear] or things like that. And there's this guy. He used to ... he used to love his parties and they used to take pictures of him. And he hadn't said he's gay. The first thing we noticed is the way he used to dress. And most of knew, cause Swaziland is small, and he did have mannerisms and things like that. And at one point at time, he just stopped denying it. He just said, “I'm gay”. And he was attacked.

**Joanne:** Shaw, man.

**Wandile:** He was attacked. He was beaten up and things like that. And when they took him to hospital, a lot of doctors refused to help him out.

**Joanne:** Oh, man.

**Tessa:** Ah, wow.

**Wandile:** So, it was a serious case. Because at the end of the day, he ended up having to go like 20 kilometres away from this hospital to another hospital and it was a private hosp- , private clinic, and they were willing to assist. But the government hospitals, most of the doctors refused to help him because he was gay. So, being ... Swaziland is very homophobic. Very, very homophobic. We do have a lot of gay

Wandile recounts a very disturbing and violent story of a gay man in Swaziland being attacked and then refused treatment at several public hospitals because of his sexuality. She paints a picture of Swaziland, and labels it, as a homophobic space that disciplines marginalised sexualities with harsh violence. The participants utilise such examples in the process of recreating their home spaces in their new context. As I mentioned in previous sections, many of these participants are undergoing a negotiation of their own embodied identities, the anxiety-ridden confrontations of their being in this new context. Outside of her own body, Wandile is simultaneously contributing to a discursive recreation of the home, challenging the meanings of her former context within the relatively safe space of the focus group.

Almost all of the participants engage in the process of recreating the home discursively within the focus group. I will focus more on this idea in a later chapter on the meaning of being foreign. I will do so in that later section because I believe the meaning of “foreign” is inextricably tied with the meaning of “home”; as such, I do not entirely wish to separate them, and will only consider it here in context of ideas of freedoms in contrast to the home. These participants in particular do so through this technique of labelling home as, in this case, homophobic and violent. I believe that the process of negotiating and adopting new subjectivities includes a recreation of the meaning of home through this technique of labelling. An interesting series of comments took place in a focus group composed entirely of Namibian students.

**Fabian:** I mean, yeah, Mimi and I hung out a lot because we were like, had like equal amounts of black friends and white friends. She was kind of like, very weird in Windhoek High School.

[Some agreeing]

**Fabian:** And then...

**Ndayola:** Yeah, Mimi had lots of white friends.

**Fabian:** Yeah, she had lots of white friends and so did I and um, yeah, you just get like snide comments from like both sides.

Fabian is employing these two techniques through his explanation of high schools – both

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guys, but you know they always tell you that it's tough being gay in Swaziland, it's really tough. I can't imagine anyone just saying it openly, “I'm gay”.

labelling Namibia as a segregated society and making sure to point out how he was an exception to that.

In the same focus group:

**Tuli:** You feel like the worlds so big, and there's a lot for you to do. Whereas, in Namibia, there's just one little [unclear], one little bubble you can never get out.

**Zina:** You can never get anywhere. You just feel like you'll be, work at the bank. Or become a hairdresser or something like that. Get pregnant. Buy a City Golf.

**Tuli:** Buy a City Golf! **[Laughter]**

Within this group of participants, (again, all from Windhoek, Namibia) there was often consensus around portraying South Africa and Cape Town in narratives of the “glamorous big city”<sup>3</sup> and Namibia, the counter to that, in terms of it being a small, traditional, homophobic country. In analysing this specific set of discourses, I believe it is also important to note the uncommon context in which they were employed. Most of the participants knew each other or had friends in common in the focus group through their high school years in Windhoek. This may have led to a particular need to employ such techniques in the presence of one another. Additionally, I was present – a white, Westerner in a position of authority and privilege. Furthermore, in the comments from twin sisters Tuli and Zina, they are disparaging the “little bubble” in Windhoek, where those who stay end up in mundane jobs and driving the same car. It seems that the participants are happy to engage, repeat, and contribute to such discourses around their home – they managed to get out and come to live and thrive in the “glamorous” Cape Town. The deployment of such discourses and the participants reinforcement of them within the focus group positions them as subjects with greater access to power. The participants are perhaps bolstering themselves as a group and in relation to one another. They have agreed on the terms (Namibia and its values afford low social capital), and thereby engage in a process of ensuring themselves and each other how far removed they

<sup>3</sup> **Zina:** [...] In Namibia, South Africa was like the place to be.

**Fabian:** Exactly.

**Zina:** I don't know-

**Fabian:** Pretty glamorized.

**Zina:** Like the scene, the dream.

**Tuli:** Yeah, it's glamorized a lot. Like, if you go to South Africa, everyone's like, wow.



are from their home, how “Western” and “modern” they have become. The focus group becomes a space for subjects to jostle for esteem in “relation to others” (Diprose, 1994: 35).

Interestingly, this discourse and system of social hierarchy is employed during a time when, as Lewis (2003) contends, “Western” is employed with virulence, associated with diluting, modern forces, neo-colonialism and attacks against an authentic African culture. In this context, questionably the larger UCT community or simply that of the focus group, claims to “Western” styles and ideologies seem to bring about greater esteem and access to power and status. For example, the twin sisters Zina and Tuli explain their reception in Windhoek, their home, to their styles after two years of living in Johannesburg.

**Zina:** Yeah, they’re, like, they just think we’re from Joburg. They don’t think-

**Tuli:** They don’t think we’re from Namibia.

**Zina:** When we go there, people don’t think we’re from Namibia, because we just don’t look it.

**Fabian:** Thankfully.

[a laugh]

**Ndayola:** No, I won’t lie, I didn’t think you guys were Namibian either.

**Tuli:** Yeah, no one thinks we’re Namibian. Like, we meet a lot of Namibians-

**Zina:** You don’t see people like this. You won’t see someone with tattoos and hair and stuff like that.

The change in bodily performance – in their styles, hair, clothes, and tattoos – results in those at home and a peer in the focus group, Ndayola, misreading the two women’s nationality. The sisters position themselves instead as “individuals”<sup>4</sup>, pitted against the harsh judgments of Windhoek society. It echoes Foucault’s (1978) interpretation of the individual who shouts about sexual freedom in the face of social taboos. The adoption of this technique, in framing oneself as “different” and an exception to the norms of one’s home society, becomes a method of seeking power in a context that the participants perceive rewards this “individual” behaviour. The “freedoms” they interpret, and on

<sup>4</sup> **Zina:** You can’t be an individual. Like, you have to, you have to-

**Ndayola:** You can’t be an individual.

**Tuli:** When we go there now, people look at us like-

some occasions indulge in, become not only a manner in which to assimilate oneself (as Zina and Tuli have to the extent that they do not “look” Namibian) but part of a struggle to adopt (or reject, or negotiate within) new subjectivities with greater access to power and social capital in this new field. These are deeply political entanglements with meanings of both their former homes and their new context.

University of Cape Town

## 6. Discourses of (In)Security

A young man strolls casually, approaching two much larger looking men. Just after the first young man passes, he pats down his pockets and notices his wallet is missing and looks back at the two bigger men in shock, anger, and frustration.

This was a scene from the first day of the International Academic Programmes Office 2010 orientation session at UCT. All new international students were invited to a multi-day reception where Orientation Leaders and university officials provided information about the academic and social life of the university. In one of these information sessions, Campus Protection Services representative Bernard Sols warned students about the presence of crime on campus and steps they should take to ensure their safety. “Wherever you come from, you maybe streetwise there,” Sols said, “But you’re not streetwise in Cape Town.”

As Sols’s presentation continued, he warned students to watch their personal items, even on campus. CPS also provides “safe walks” to students, escorting them from campus buildings to the residence halls at night. There is also the “blue safe walk” – a well-lit path from Upper Campus to the Lower Campus residences with several designated posts in which, in case of emergency, students can call campus security. Sols also recommended purchasing defensive spray, which one woman in the audience asked further questions about. Another student asked about walking along Wolsack Road, an on-campus path near the Baxter Theatre in Lower Campus; Sols recommended never walking alone – “Your safety is in numbers.”

However, for almost all the participants interviewed, before they even arrived in Cape Town, they were well aware of the crime. The reputation of South Africa precedes first-year students introduction to this space. I will argue that discourses of (in)security, crime, and safety all serve to regulate the bodies of the participants in their transition to Cape Town. In considering embodiment, Csordas (1994) argues that a culture may be examined through its impact on bodies. As such, the impact of discourses of security and

safety on the participants, and their behaviours, may be used to examine the culture and meaning of South African spaces and how its regulation of certain bodies in certain locations impedes a free movement and bodily autonomy of many, if not all, of its residents.

In this research, I have considered both men's and women's responses to fear of crime and the multiple ways in which they negotiate their own subjective experiences, on the street and within the focus group, to ultimately manoeuvre themselves into positions of power and control in the seemingly chaotic discursive space of insecurity and fear. Whether this is a successful enterprise or not is not within the scope of my research so much as examining individuals in flux as they contribute to their own identity formation in the creation of new discourses around crime in Cape Town.

So how do discourses around crime and safety relate to regulations of the body? Very directly, in fact, as constantly repeated tips and stories about crime establish where and when we travel in these bodies and in what manner. Spaces described as safe or dangerous determine our routes home. Discourses of crime and safety directly regulate free movement of bodies, particularly, I will argue, in this moment of transition where such fears are heightened through the participants "newness" and "foreignness" in this space – their "being-in-the-world" (Csordas, 1994) brings on heightened anxiety.

Finally, I will analyse participants' responses in context of feminist geography research on the intersection of embodiment and space in terms of discourses of safety and insecurity. Researchers such as Pain (2000), Valentine (1989), and Mehta and Bondi (1999) engage with questions of space, insecurity, and subjectivities that erupt in studies of fear of crime and gender.

These perspectives will be integrated into my analysis of the participants' discourses and their recounting of their personal experiences with crime and insecurity in Cape Town. In examining the transcripts, I have divided this chapter into four sub-categories: "They will be on every street corner, try to kill you...", Safe Zones; What Does Crime in South

Africa ‘Look Like’?; and Subjectivities and Discourses of Fear (which will lead me into the final chapter on the meaning of being a foreign body in South Africa). The middle two sections, providing the mass of this chapter, will encompass questions regarding how gender and spaces interact to bring subjectivities into flux, the image of crime in South Africa from the participants’ perspectives, and through all this, how the participants place themselves into positions of discursive authority and power.

### 6.1 “They will be on every street corner, try to kill you...”

Before I move into more analysis of the use and deployment of security discourses, I wish to highlight the sheer immediacy that this topic arose in focus groups. In addition, while every single focus group mentioned crime at one point or another, the topic overtook some sessions. Without a doubt, safety and crime in South Africa is an issue on students’ minds as they arrive in Cape Town to attend university.

While my interviews were semi-structured and I would often follow the conversational lead of the participants, the second question of most focus groups was, “What had you heard about South Africa before coming here?”

**Tessa: What had you guys heard about South Africa before you came?**

**Zina:** South Africa was just like-

**Ndayola:** Crime.

Zina discounts Ndayola’s assertion<sup>5</sup>, but the group returns to the topic.

**Ndayola:** But I’ve heard so much about crime guys, like-

**Sophie:** Yeah, me too. Like, I was, like all these dangerous-

**Christy:** I heard a lot about crime as well. A lot.

**Sophie:** Too much actually. It was scary.

**Ndayola:** Yeah, it was.

[Someone giggles]

**Christy:** No, really...

**Ndayola:** Yeah, it was.

These three participants all agree that crime was commonly associated with their new

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<sup>5</sup> **Zina:** No, I didn’t hear anything about crime.

location. Sophie, interestingly, says that it was “too much.” It is unsure whether she believes there was too much discussion around crime because it scared her or because it did not match with reality. Regardless, the conversations about crime cause fear in the participants and remains much on their minds as they engage with the new space. While Ndayola, Christy, and Sophie have all arrived within the last month for the first time in South Africa from Windhoek, Namibia, Zina, also from Windhoek, has lived in Johannesburg for the last two years. While I do not wish to contend that their limited experience in South Africa has a direct correlation with their admission of fear and insecurity, it seems there is a relationship with an individual’s initial moment of transition to this space and their heightened reception to discourses of crime.

Other participants in a similar relationship with South Africa (in that initial moment of transition) also comment on their fear and insecurity in response to often-repeated discussions of crime in South Africa.

**Thabang:** [...] Except, I’m sca- you know like, uh, the perception that most people have of South Africa, it being like dangerous, like the crime and everything. You kind of get scared, you know. [...]

While Thabang, a first-year student from Botswana, begins this statement in the first person, she quickly corrects herself and continues the discussion about crime and fear in the third and second person. The intention is to distance her self from the idea that crime and fear are affecting her; instead, in the third person, crime and fear impact an ambiguous figure. Already, even in their initial admissions of fear, we can see how participants attempt to relocate their own subjective experiences in order to dismiss the impact that fear of crime has on their own bodily autonomy.

Patrick, a first-year student from Harare, Zimbabwe, also employs distancing tactics in order to express a fear of crime, but a fear unrelated to his own experience.

**Patrick:** [...] For my mom, she was more scared about me being mugged, or what not. Because she knows I’m not a very careful person. [...]

Instead of Patrick admitting his own fears regarding his safety, his mother is the one who is afraid for his safety, especially in light of his own disregard (“... I’m not a very careful person”). The result is two-fold: He separates himself from feelings of vulnerability, and, at the same time, asserts his audacity in the face of well-established fears. His mother’s fears are the result of both the discourses of crime and insecurity in South Africa, and Patrick’s own (brave) disregard of these risks. In a later section, I will again point to the techniques Patrick employs to adopt a position of power in the context of body regulations.

Finally, I wish to point out the extreme nature of violent and fearful discourses that participants repeat in the focus group situation in response to questions about their knowledge of South Africa prior to their arrival in Cape Town.

**Tessa: [...]** So um, what did, what did you, what had you heard about South Africa before you came here? Before you decided to move to Cape Town?

**Noelene:** Ok, um, South Africa. Xenophobia.

**Tessa: Xenophobia?**

**Noelene:** Yeah, and all... seriously, I was thinking South Africa is such a harmful place. Like people will steal from you, they kill you, besides the xenophobia thing. They will be on every street corner, try to kill you, and just South Africans are not friendly and all that stuff, yeah. That’s what I was thinking, and I really dreaded to come here. I didn’t want to come here.

These are truly terrifying fears. The reputation of South African crime is not mere “pick-pocketing” and loss of personal property, but violent images of murder, rape, and assault. I believe the intensely violent images and rumours around crime in South Africa, its pervasive nature, and the immediate threat to bodily integrity, compound its impact in regulating the free movement of bodies in this space.

## **6.2. Safe Zones**

Fear of crime is highly spatialised (Pain, 1991; Valentine, 1992; Pain, 2000). Particular locations (neighbourhoods or streets), circumstances around those spaces (time of the day), and the constant interplay with subjectivities result in specific locations being

discursively identified as “safe” or “dangerous”. In this section, I will use participants’ words to point to specific spaces referred to as “safe” and “dangerous”, how they navigate within these spaces safely, spaces of vulnerability and the consequences, and the discursive tactics of “survivors”.

**Thabang:** [...] Um, OK. Um, in the reses<sup>6</sup>, like places around the reses, it’s a bit safe because you have people patrolling 24/7. And I mean, sometimes I look outside my window and there’s just two guys like walking up and down like Graça Machel and Baxter and Tugwell and – So I think around that place it’s fine. I’m not sure about like the Main Road and up, cause, like at the mall, inside Cape Town, like main Cape Town, and stuff like that. I think here we’re kind of safe. So we can just walk out late at night and stuff like that. But, Main Road, no. I wouldn’t trust it much.

**Yambi:** Or like Observatory-

**Thabang:** Yeah, where those people got shot.

**Wisy:** I wouldn’t, I’ve never gone like alone into Cape Town – well, I’ve gone like once or twice into Cape Town, but like taking the train. And I get to the train station and I get out, like, and I just walk, like, to the mall or something. Like, I don’t even know, like, who’s like, cause it’s always just packed, you know. [Unclear] and up and down. So, like, I’m [unclear] and the train, and, like, “Oh, now we’re going to get mugged” you know. Then, I walk into a cab, you know. [...]

In the transition to South Africa, Cape Town, and UCT, participants quickly try to ascertain what spaces are “safe” and what are “dangerous”. As shown in the previous section, many participants come to South Africa with clear perceptions of the crime situation and express feelings of vulnerability. Once grounded in Cape Town, beginning their time at UCT, participants must learn more exhaustively the minute spaces of “safety” and “dangerousness” in order to remain mobile in the new context.

As shown, Thabang, a first-year student from Botswana, feels safe in the areas around the UCT student residences (she points to Graça Machel and Tugwell, both in Lower Campus, and the nearby Baxter Theatre Hall) due to the presence of security officers patrolling 24 hours a day. She frames a zone of safety (even “late at night”) around her residence hall and the semi-private surrounding areas in Lower Campus. I say semi-private because this area is, as a university campus, intended for fellow students, despite

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<sup>6</sup> “Reses” is slang for residence halls, or student housing on campus.



a lack of fencing around this area from the public street nearby. However, the delineation between “safe” and “dangerous” is close – Main Road, not a mere 50 metres from Tugwell, is “dangerous”.

Thabang reiterates what Valentine refers to as the “mismatch” between women’s perceptions of violence and the realities of the geography of violence (1992: 22). The public realm (in this case Main Road) is perceived as a “world where the behaviours of strangers is unpredictable with male violence” (1992: 24). Furthermore, I question whether Thabang is discursively reproducing ideologies of certain spaces in terms of their predominant inhabitants; whereas, students are perceived as benign, perhaps also victims of crimes but not perpetrators, the Main Road area, the larger public, the space of the “Other” (Said, 1978), is “dangerous”. As, several researchers (Valentine, 1996; Bell, Binnie, Cream and Valentine, 1994) show, ideologies (in their examples, sexualities) are imbued into spaces; ideologies that become contested based on the inhabitants and discourses that shroud that space. Interestingly enough, Thabang does not specifically say she feels vulnerable in Main Road, but that she does not “trust” it. Being part of a similar community, the fellow students at UCT, provides a sense of safety and trust in the space around her residence that she does not feel for the anonymous public in the street.

While she and first-year Angolan student Yambi concretely agree on Observatory (the neighbourhood very near the university campus) as being “dangerous”, Wisy, a first-year student from Namibia, seems conflicted in the process of labelling certain spaces. Perhaps it was easy to ascertain quickly that Observatory is a “dangerous” space based on the very recent murders of two students in that area (Warner, 2010). However, what Wisy’s example reveals is how often the conflict of discourses and personal experiences unhinged this process - part of the participants’ education of their new city. His blatant contradictions show how uncertain these participants are in these early moments of transition to this space. They are navigating amid their own perceptions, their own subjectivities, the new discourses, and their desire to regain power in the context of destabilising fears and insecurities. Part of this anxiety-ridden process includes participants entering fields (such as the university setting) where they must reassert (or

adopt) their subjectivities and ascertain the ideologies of spaces in relation to their constructed self.

I would like to make a short point in regards to replicating binaries, as it may seem that I am doing the same in considering spaces simply “safe” or “dangerous”. I wish to make clear that although participants (and I) adopted shorthand of referring to spaces as “safe” or “dangerous”, individuals obviously encounter a spectrum of spaces and varying levels of vulnerability within each space. Furthermore, even as participants – within this disrupting transition – may cling to simple binaries, their agency and mediation of these presumptions exposes their need to complicate ideologies of spaces, perhaps simply for their own freedom and mobility.

Twin sisters from Namibia, Zina and Tuli have lived in South Africa for two years for high school in Johannesburg before moving to Cape Town to attend UCT. During their stay there, Zina describes following the advice of locals on where to stay safely:

**Zina:** Don't go out at night, don't... lock the doors. Everyone has to stay in their gated community. If you don't stay in a gated community, you're pretty much screwed. So yeah, we stayed in a gated community, and yeah. We haven't experienced anything bad.

Safe zones again, are described in connection to the private sphere, and again, high levels of security are needed to ensure well-being within the zone. Like Thabang, Zina survived the Johannesburg crime due to the safety of security walls, gates, and gated communities, because otherwise, “you're pretty much screwed.”

In Zina's experience, living in a gated community meant they “haven't experienced anything bad.” Her experience and her statement in the focus group reproduce the ideology of the gated community as a safe zone against the larger city environment in “dangerous” Johannesburg. Clearly, the participants note of security guards, gated communities, bright lighting, and the UCT “safe walk” all contribute to notions that these spaces are a haven against the chaotic danger outside of them *and* a fearfulness of that

“outside” expanse. As Day points out, “Feminine gender identities are produced not in isolation, but through negotiation with and (frequently) polarization from masculine gender identities” (2001: 110). Would then the construction of specific “safe zones” perpetuate, in polarization, the production of dangerous spaces outside of these demarcated zones?

I will end this point of analysis with a final quote from first-year Zimbabwean student Noelene.

**Noelene:** [...] One thing that I like about it is that UCT has tried so much to take care of us. Like security wise, like, I come from the library at 10 every day and then there’s a guard walking my rode everyday, cause I live on Main Road. So he’s walking every time and making sure that, sometimes asks me, “Are you OK? Where are you going?” And I’m like “I’m almost home, and stuff” [...]

Noelene’s comment follows many patterns described previously; she looks at security guards as demarcations of safe zones, hints at vulnerability on the public street at night, and alludes to moving quickly to seek the safety and security of her private home.

However, as Noelene also demonstrates, the participants do not always stay within specific zones constructed as always “safe”, i.e. their homes. Instead, they must navigate within the “dangerous” public arena, through which they construct mobile safe zones around their bodies through tactics and tips they learn in this transition. These demonstrate ways in which, one, participants still regulate their bodily practices in their entrance into constructed safe zones by employing these tactics; and, two, demonstrate their agency in taking on the “dangerous” spaces, albeit mitigated through these techniques. Thirdly, participants discursively reproduce bodily regulations in their relaying of tips and tactics, or dispensations of knowledge, a method also employed through the focus group sessions (and arguably in their larger social circles) to position themselves as authority figures.

**Dorothy:** [...] As opposed to here, where you are told that you have to walk in groups all the time.

Dorothy, a first-year student from Zimbabwe, describes the commonly repeated tactic of walking around in groups. This technique, also recommended by Bernard Sols, deputy head of UCT Campus Protection Services, undoubtedly limits bodily movement – what if your group of friends are not going where you wish to go? The difficulty of assembling a team of cohorts to visit the ice cream store in Rondebosch would obviously limit and control one's movement into the public space. Dorothy also exemplifies a moment in the transition where she has not yet experienced enough within this new context to create her own tips and techniques. Her use of the passive voice (“you are told”) exhibits herself as the object of discourse rather than the creator of it.

**Thabang:** [...] You can't walk around at night, and stuff like that. So, yeah. And... When I hear what's been happening in Cape Town like this weekend, I think that's really scary.

**Tessa:** Yeah.

**Thabang:** Yeah, so yeah.

**Wisy:** Yeah, that's definitely true. Like, going out with friends and stuff. Like, it's better going out in a group than going out in two or one.

And later:

**Wisy:** [...] Like my sister told me that, um, that when I came here earlier this year, she told me that, she gave me tips, you know, like don't walk around at night and study during the day [unclear]. And she told me about, um, the student getting shot like a year ago in Mowbray, or two years ago in Mowbray. That's about the first that I heard about, um, like, a UCT student who [unclear], so it was about like...

Thabang again reiterates the seemingly well-accepted adage that one should not walk around in Cape Town at night. This, she says, is especially true considering what happened the weekend before, when UCT student Dominic Giddy was stabbed and killed while he was coming home late at night with two friends (Warner, 2010). However, Wisy, a first-year Namibian student, jumps in to give some advice – going out in groups. Here, one can observe both the use of tactics (more bodies together is safer than the solo body out at night) in engaging with “dangerous” spaces, and how the perpetuation of advice puts people into terrains of power, where they cite ways in which to manage safety

and mitigate fears, placing them in positions of authority.

Later, Wisy concedes such advice and “tips” comes from his sister, whose authority is unquestioned, as she has lived in Cape Town before. The notion that longer experience with the Cape Town or South African terrain brings with it seats of power and authority is one that I will explore more fully later on in this chapter. The manner in which Wisy presents his sister’s tips affords them with even more authority. She recommends never walking out at night; he follows this tip with immediately citing the story of Pakiso Moqobane, the 19-year-old UCT student, who was shot walking in Observatory the previous year. In a tragic contradiction to Wisy’s earlier advice, Moqobane was walking with a friend at the time and near his home at the university’s residence hall (University of Cape Town Daily News, 2009).

As such, “safe zones” are created, hegemonically controlled by discourses that repeat such tips and techniques, the result is heightened feelings of vulnerability when traversing “dangerously”. For example:

**Wandile:** [...] But then you’re taught that when you’re here, you must be very careful of the things you do. You can get raped walking around, and things like that. So, more people are scared about you coming here, they really don’t [want] you to come here.

The participants express these threats very clearly – walking around alone in South Africa means one is vulnerable to mugging, rapes, assault, and violence. The message is clear that if an individual is not “very careful of the things you do” one is likely to attract these perpetrators. As such, participants have a direct urgency in their need to learn the new zones of “safety” and “dangerousness”. Otherwise, they may step across these invisible borders and demarcations into spaces where their bodies are vulnerable.

As described in an earlier chapter, normalising judgements bring bodies into a standard of performance (Foucault, 1977). Participants describe situations and discourses in which their bodies move into “dangerous” spaces and the resulting disciplines. Ndayola’s story

also shows this urgency in learning the ideology and “labels” of the spaces around them.

**Ndayola:** [...] But I walked across, like, literally across the street to the KFC from my res. My res is here, and the KFC is there. And I get back - I walked alone - I didn't know I wasn't supposed to. It was like, the night. It wasn't anything. And I came back. And I got an ice cream, and my friends were like, “Oh, where did you get it?” I was like, “Oh, KFC.” And they're like, “You went alone!?” [Some laughs from the group]. “To the KFC?!” And I was like, “Yeah.” And they were like, “No girl you don't go alone to the KFC. Not at night.” Like, seriously. And I mean, it's like across the street. It's like a 100 metres, 150 metres. So, it's really different.

Here, Ndayola, a first-year student from Namibia, describes the shock of the other students in her residence hall when she went out alone and crossed Main Road at night. Again, discourses construct Main Road, a major thoroughfare for students as it runs next to the university campus, as a “dangerous” site. Furthermore, Ndayola, as a young woman alone, is a vulnerable body in this space. However, most interestingly is the manner in which this behaviour is treated. Her actions receive a shock from her peers, and they quickly tell her why it is wrong. The two key reasons her actions were judged as “inappropriate” were the circumstances of the space (it was nighttime) and the circumstances of her body (it was alone). These repeated recommendations, tips and techniques, and labelling of “safe” and “dangerous” spaces become another means for regulation of bodies. An individual acquires experiential knowledge through which they disperse advice to others, seating themselves as “experts” on the terrain. These knowledges become repeated techniques to mitigate fear of crime and vulnerability, and also a manner through which bodies are routinely regulated. While there is a clear gendered dimension to these discourses (which I will come to shortly), all bodies find varying levels of regulations, which inhibit “personal freedom and decrease general quality of life” (Pain, 1991: 416). In Ndayola's case, it is her *use* of her body, the spiriting across the street at night, moving across “dangerous” zones, that is subject to discipline.

The participants, in this moment of transition, find themselves angling to partake in the productive form of power – the replication and creation of tips, techniques, and methods

to avoid crime, thus affording the speaker a position of authority within the social space; and the experience and retelling of stories in which the subject *survives* interactions in “dangerous” spaces.

While participants of all genders set about displaying their authority and power through the reproduction of ways to navigate this new, “dangerous” terrain, the adoption of survivor stories, as I will refer to them, was a particularly masculine technique within this study. Survivor stories were instances in which the participant recounted an experience of moving into a space discursively constructed as “dangerous” and did not encounter crime or were not a victim of it.

In this chapter, the meanings of spaces and their position along a spectrum of safety are debated, reinforced, and negotiated in relation to subjectivities of the individual. As such, a technique in the adoption of a masculine subjectivity, I believe, is the perpetuation of survivor stories that position the speaker in almost a “hero” framing – a brave (or reckless) individual that both understands the surroundings enough to realise the dangerousness but manages to avoid the almost unavoidable spectre of South African crime. In a later section, I will demonstrate how the participants describe crime in South Africa as nearly omnipotent and all encompassing; while this may seem contradictory to earlier claims of identifying “dangerous” spaces, this also showcases the tensions and anxieties underlying participants’ discourses in their attempts to regain control.

**Patrick:** So I got here and, like she said, I was acting paranoid about the crime, and I would walk around holding my chest. And there’s one... sometime last week. The Big Bash night, cause it was after the thing. It was around 12 or 1, and I had to take a cab back home. So I was like “Oh, what’s going to happen to me here?” And it wasn’t really hectic. I was in Main Road for a little, waiting for a cab, and it’s actually not that as bad as you think when you’re coming. I mean, I’m sure there are... you should be careful. But even in Zimbabwe, you should be careful. It’s not as horrible as the way it’s portrayed at home. You’d think you’re not to step outside the house after six o’clock. Or whenever it’s dark.

After admitting an irrational paranoia of crime in Cape Town, Patrick goes on to demonstrate through his story how he successfully navigates the “dangerous” terrain of

Main Road. There, as a solitary body at night, no one attacked him, despite the fierce reiteration of discourses that paint Main Road as a crime haven. This was not just a quick jaunt into “dangerous” spaces, but Patrick remained there “for a while, waiting for a cab”. Thus, he concludes, “It’s actually not that - as bad as you think when you’re coming.”

Overcoming his “paranoia”, Patrick survives his nighttime foray into Main Road and concludes that, “It’s not as horrible as the way it’s portrayed at home.” Beyond overcoming his emotions, he has both survived the situation described and placed his self as an authority with the power to challenge the dominant discourse. Although often research incorporating a gender dimension to fear of crime portrays men’s experiences of fear of crime as invulnerability (Hollander, 2001) or as responding with violence (Mehta and Bondi, 1999), these participants position themselves within a masculine subjectivity less directly. None of the male participants outright deny a fear of crime (of course some qualify their fears to greater or lesser degrees), unlike other studies (Day, 2001). However, some of these male participants manipulate the dominant discourse to position themselves as these survivor figures, challenging the construction of “dangerousness”.

Perhaps the degree of power, authority, and masculinity attained correlates somewhat to the perceptions of how “dangerous” (and violent) the traversed space is. For example, while Patrick describes his experience on Main Road, in another focus group, Yambi (a first-year Angolan student) tells of a late-night walk through Alexandra, a township in Johannesburg.

**Yambi:** Yeah, exactly, yeah, Alexandra is really, really, really dangerous. It’s 1 o’clock in the morning and the three of us, and we walked right through the middle of Alexandra on the main road. [...] And still, it’s four o’clock and I’m walking, I’m walking in the middle of Alexandra, you know. Still, I just, um, I [unclear], I just felt comfortable, and we weren’t stopped once. Maybe once, but we did see a lot of these gangs, yeah, you know, yeah, and they’re at the park but the bush, yeah. So yeah, like it makes me think that, you know, the whole crime scene, all of the fear that people have, um, the crime in South Africa is, like, a little bit like speculation. Yeah, you know, I think people believe it a lot just for the fact that it’s in their minds. Yeah.



Yambi exercises a strikingly similar discursive tactic as Patrick: Establish a space commonly constructed as dangerous (Alexandra), tell of his survival of that “dangerous” space, and conclude that the discourses paint a more dangerous picture than reality (“the whole crime scene, all of the fear that people have, um, the crime in South Africa is like, a little bit like speculation”). Yambi perhaps carries even more authority, thus power and masculinity, in his words for two reasons – he possesses authority to critique dominant discourses of fear of crime through his two years of experience in living in Johannesburg, and his story describes his survival through a place that is, according to him, excessively dangerous (“really, really, really dangerous”). The descriptions he adds of Alexandra heighten his adoption of this brave, survivalist masculinity; it is in the middle of the night, and, “We did see a lot of these gangs”. These details add to the bravado of his actions and the validity of his story.

**Mthabisi:** Yeah, for me personally, I think I’ve been toughened up. Like, like, I used to stay in Hillbrow.

**Tessa: Where, where?**

**Mthabisi:** Hillbrow.

**Tessa: Oh, yes.**

**Mthabisi:** The crime capital. Of South Africa if not the world.

[Yambi I think says ‘yes’ in agreement]

**Mthabisi:** You saw these things live, people get shot, police are just walking past. [Some from the group say ‘wow’]

**Mthabisi:** Yeah. I’ve seen two people get shot. [Something unclear] So, I think I’ve been toughened up. You know, I’ve been living with them; I’ve seen it all happen. Yeah.

Again, Mthabisi adopts a particular masculinity through his experience in being “toughened up” living in Hillbrow, an area near downtown Johannesburg. It seems, again, these survival stories contain particular details necessary to establish the dominance of the speaker. Mthabisi confirms that the peers in the focus group understand the extent to which Hillbrow is established as “dangerous”. He labels it (the most dangerous place perhaps, “the crime capital”), and adds to his story by describing what he saw “live” – “people getting shot, police are just walking past”. While Yambi and Patrick use their survival stories to comment on the dominant discourses of the all-encompassing crime and the particular ideologies of “dangerous” spaces to bolster their own authority

within the focus group, Mthabisi's technique is more direct and corresponding with previous research (see Day, 2001). He specifically adopts the masculine discourse of near invulnerability to such crime. While emphasizing Hillbrow as a very dangerous space, his two years without incident position him as invincible to these violent forces.

In approaching such discourses through the frame of embodiment, I must consider how these discourses reflect the individual's negotiation of subjectivities and performances within a context or field, and based on their lived experience within the materiality of their body (see Csordas, 1994; Young, 2005). For someone living in Hillbrow, perceived as this "crime capital", his or her very survival may depend on "toughening up" (Mthabisi also describes how he learned to "look away" like other South Africans when they witnessed crime taking place<sup>7</sup>). These are embodied strategies and tactics for survival – ways in which he uses his body to mitigate vulnerability. In a similar way, in a transition to Cape Town, Mthabisi must also survive, and perhaps through the only method he knows – maintaining his status as an authority on South Africa through discursive reproductions of his masculinity and power. Like all new students to UCT, these participants are struggling to adapt to new spaces of insecurity, learn "safe" zones, and how to adapt, perhaps by empowering themselves through adoption and creation of discourses that position themselves favourably within power relations. I believe one method of this struggle to be this adoption of a particularly masculine use of survivor stories within the focus group space.

### **6.3 What Does Crime in South Africa 'Look Like'?**

Crime is everywhere. Crime is on Main Road. All criminals look the same. As described in the previous section, part of the transition to Cape Town and South Africa is the encounter and negotiation within new discourses of insecurity. While many of the participants describe tips and techniques to navigate the "dangerous" terrain, I was also concerned with how these discourses differ from their home country. What arose is a

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<sup>7</sup> **Mthabisi:** - Yeah, and you scream and scream and scream and they look at you and look aside- [...] As if they didn't see what's happening. [...] After [unclear], I also look aside.

picture, from the participants, of what crime in South Africa “looks like” – types of crime, spaces these crimes take place, and perpetrators and how they act and look. I will argue that, again, participants ascertain and repeat these descriptions of South African crime in order to “cope” in some form, mitigate their feelings of insecurity, and, in some cases, employ an almost panoptic view (Foucault, 1977) of the criminal terrain.<sup>8</sup>

Firstly, as I pointed out in the first section, participants had very much heard of crime in South Africa prior to their arrival. As such, I questioned them on what they had heard.

**Dorothy:** [...] And I think my parents were very afraid, my dad especially. Because you hear such bad stories about the violence here and everything, and, “What if this happens to you? And what if that happens to you?”

**Tessa: What kind of things?**

**Dorothy:** Getting mugged. Getting hijacked. Getting robbed. Cause also those... those are the stories that you hear in the news and the radio.

These types of crimes – muggings, hijackings, and aggravated robbery - are the ones predominantly mentioned by the participants. As such, participants portray crime in South Africa as largely personal (meaning the victim engages bodily with the perpetrator) and violent.

**Dorothy:** My dad kept saying, “You’re going to a foreign country.” I think he has this belief that South African people are generally violent because of their history. Yeah, something like that. And he says, like, in Zimbabwe, it would be hard to find anyone who would kill you for your cell phone. It’s like... yeah, and here, you hear that somebody got killed for their cell phone, so yeah.. It’s like different from home.

Dorothy, a first-year woman from Zimbabwe, believes, through the stories of her father, that the crime in South Africa is *excessively* violent. While I am not intending to imply that there are reasonable levels of violence in relation to crime, Dorothy’s statement suggests that such benefits of crime (a cell phone) does not equate with the intensity of violence (“somebody got killed for their cell phone”). This differs from the criminal terrain in her home country; although you will find perpetrators who will kill and those

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<sup>8</sup> Thanks to Jane Bennett for this observation.

who will steal your cell phone, it seems implausible to Dorothy to “find anyone who would kill you for your cell phone.” The two seem incongruent and shocking to her.

**Tessa: What kinds of things had you heard about crime though?**

[...]

**Ndayola:** Murder, hijackings, rapes, hijackings.

[...]

**Sophie:** In SA, walking down the street, and a grandmother will come stab you [giggling].

**Ndayola:** Yeah, I’ve heard crazy things like that happen.

Again, Ndayola and Sophie, two women from Namibia, reiterate the absolutely shocking levels of violence and the perceived insanity of it. Ndayola also repeats Dorothy’s mention of contact crimes (“murder, hijackings, rapes”). Perhaps these forms of crime are the only ones mentioned (thus portraying them as the sole types of crime in South Africa) for their overwhelming presence in the press and as the most fear inducing of crimes. Sophie’s comment I find particularly interesting; even an innocent-seeming grandmother “will come and stab you”. Everyone in South Africa may be a perpetrator of violence.

**Noelene:** Uhh... I just was thinking death. Yeah, like, because of... maybe when you’re, you’re watching the news, right? It’s like, like, when you’re back home, it’s like they show that someone has been killed, someone’s been shot dead. And my dad when he came here, there was one – they stole from him at gunpoint. And so, I’m just thinking- [...]. So, I’m thinking, Ok, they can steal my cell phone from me, but how is he going to do that? Maybe it’s somewhere in my pocket, and I’m going to feel it, so he’s going to put a knife here, maybe threaten me, maybe he’s going to kill me by mistake trying to threaten me. I’m just, I’m just thinking either way, he’s just going to cut you, hurt you, or do that kind of stuff. That’s what I’m thinking.

Most of the participants, like Noelene, refer to hearing things at home through family and the news media. The images Noelene presents mirror that of her peers – excessively violent, one-on-one crime, oftentimes with the use of weapons (mostly knives mentioned, but here, a gun in her father’s story).

The presentation of crime is one that inflicts injury and death without regard to the value of life or the intention of the theft. If it is a robbery, mugging, or assault, death and injury are surely to be the result. Noelene explicitly describes the overwhelming fears of the

participants – the value of cars and cell phones is not important as their bodily safety and autonomy. They simply, and perhaps obviously, just do not want to be hurt or killed over something as worthless as a cell phone, a well-founded concern considering the high levels of victims' injuries following an incident of crime (Schönteich, 2000).

**Thabang:** [...] Like, OK, the things about, like, South African crime is, like, it's so, um, how can I say? – like, um, into the detail. Like, if I'm gonna rob you, I make sure I rob you real well. You know, that traced back to me. And thought - that really intelligent, um, crime, that everything like that. [...]

**Tessa:** Oh just kind – where, what had you heard before?

Thabang: What have I heard... um, like, rape cases, um, people murdering each other, like, um, some kidnaps, they're so high, and hijacking. If you go to Park Station in Joburg, that's where like the real crime scene is.

Firstly, Thabang's comment repeats the types of crime mentioned previously – rapes, murders, and hijackings. I find it interesting that only the female participants in the study really indulged in this aspect in describing South African crime. Despite the finding in this study that both men and women report a fear of crime, most previous research focused on women's nearly constant fear of violence in public spaces (Pain, 1991; Valentine, 1992; Pain, 2000). However, I believe I do not totalise the female participants' experiences as inevitable and disempowering, but point to the manner in which they engage with meanings and their bodies in the process of transition. Nevertheless, the point remains that many of the women's descriptions of violence in South Africa come with an edge that implies, "This may happen to *me*".

**Thabang:** You know, that traced back to me.

**Noelene:** So, I'm thinking, Ok, they can steal my cell phone from me, but how is he going to do that?

**Dorothy:** Because you hear such bad stories about the violence here and everything, and "What if this happens to you? And what if that happens to you?"

Only Wandile, a first-year Swazi man, describes crime similarly. However, he puts it in

context of reading information regarding South African universities.

**Tessa:** What kind of crime, like when you guys imagine crime in South Africa, what is it? What is the kind of crime that comes to mind, I guess?

**Wandile:** Um... something like mobile, theft of cell phone, yeah. Gun point, car hijacking. Yeah, and you are told even in the prospectus for some universities, like the Universities of Pretoria and the University of Witwatersrand. They tell you, remember, your cell phone is not valuable more than your life. So, that statement is [unclear –“ambiguous”] so they can tell you to be prepared for something like that.

Firstly, Wandile discursively removes himself as the victim of crime, just simply that the universities suggest one “be prepared for something like that.” In addition, his descriptions of crime are rather perfunctory, and a list that does not include the violent imagery many of the women described. The crimes listed are thefts, rather than assaults, rapes, and murders. Does this mean women in transition in South Africa fear crime *more*? I would argue that in the South African context, vulnerability to violence is not necessarily restricted to femininities, as the previous section shows; however, in their violent depictions of the types of crimes in this field, the availability to adopt a femininity that openly expresses this fear and vulnerability makes it easier for them to do so.

Part of the discursive landscape of crime in South Africa includes a portrayal of perpetrators. Who are the people in mind who will kill, rape, steal, and hijack in the Cape Town streets? How do participants identify these agents, and what is the underlying intention and assumptions of these reports? Participants offered descriptions, oftentimes contradictory, of how criminals operate in South Africa, what they look like, and where they are as part of this ongoing process of learning the terrain of insecurity in the new space, and to purport an understanding to present themselves as figures of knowledge over a scene of anxiety and fear.

**Thabang:** So, even talking to somebody in the mall, it’s really difficult, especially in Joburg. You don’t talk to anybody, you know. Your money might just disappear and stuff like that.

Despite participants’ eagerness in the process of identifying specific spaces where crime

occurs, there is the simultaneous and contradictory perception that criminals are simply everywhere. All South Africans are perhaps the perpetrators of crime, and the participants themselves could become a victim anywhere.

Kim, a young woman from the DRC who has lived for a few years in Cape Town, describes her initial fears when moving to South Africa.

**Kim:** For me, it's like, from the beginning I had like a big issue with people. Like, I didn't know, like, coming here, like in my mind was, like, this is a dangerous country. Rape is like high, rape, and rape. And when a guy is sitting with me, I'm like, "Oh my gosh, he is going to rape me" [laughs].

Again, all unfamiliar men are possible attackers to female participants. Many women describe themselves and embody discourses that recreate femininities as vulnerable victims of crime in public spaces, whether the mall or the bus station:

**Thabang:** So we arrived at, like, Joburg at around 7 p.m. And, you know those guys like, "Can we take your luggage to your taxi?" and stuff like that? And you don't want anybody to take your, to touch your luggage cause you don't know who just might take it and like, "No, please stay away from me," literally running away from them type of thing.

As such, there are contradictory threads of discourses regarding feminine subjectivities, spaces of insecurity, and the process of learning how to navigate public streets safely. First, there is the one already described earlier in this chapter: Both men and women negotiate through the process of identifying "dangerous" and "safe" spaces, adopting tips and techniques to remain mobile through the risky street, and reproduce these discourses within the focus group and perhaps social circles to assert their knowledge and into positions of power. However, the female participants in my study also adopt a distinctly different approach from the men. Simultaneous to discussions where they express agency in traversing "dangerous" spaces, they also report a constant feeling that everyone and everywhere is unsafe, from "guys" at Park Station to grandmothers on the street (according to Sophie from Namibia). Noelene also describes:

**Noelene:** They will be on every street corner, try to kill you [...].

These embodied discourses of femininity recycle and perpetuate the notion that women are inevitably the victims of crime. The female participants comply with this discourse regarding the vulnerability of feminine subjects through their portrayal of crime as everywhere and criminals as everyone. They fear the public world nearly in its entirety.

Contrast this assertion and the examples from female participants with the men interviewed, in particular the banter between Yambi and Mthabisi. In this example, all the participants jumped into to describe the dress and actions of criminals.

**Yambi:** [...] Yeah, but then here, I think that I can spot them easily. That's why I feel safer.

**Tessa: What do criminals here look like?**

**Yambi:** Here, I think - how can I say? Oh well, they're, they're gonna, that's that [unclear-bonzula?] style.

[all laugh]

**Yambi:** Yeah.

**Tessa: What does that mean?**

**Yambi:** Old styles.

**Mthabisi:** They, these, the jeans. They wear-

**Yambi:** Tight jeans.

**Mthabisi:** Tight, they wear the earrings.

**Thabang:** I don't agree with that, maybe cause I've never seen one.

**Yambi:** Yeah, yeah well, is it? It's like-

**Tessa: So they're going to be like, Converse shoes?**

**Yambi:** Yeah-

**Tessa: And...**

**Yambi:** Yeah, well, actually I shouldn't quite generalise like that cause I've never been robbed.

**Thabang:** Yeah.

Yambi, a first-year Angolan man, claims he knows how to "spot" criminals in Cape Town – a certain style, shoes, jeans, and earrings. Immediately, Mthabisi, a first-year Zimbabwean man, jumps in to add his perspectives. A "riff" ensues: Both men play off each other, adding more details and input to the portrayal of South African criminals. Thabang, a first-year Batswana woman, juts in to comment on her doubts, but they



quickly sideline her<sup>9</sup> instead of considering the content of their words. I believe the interesting and important part of this discussion is the purpose it serves for Yambi and Mthabisi and the focus group as a whole. Here, for the two men, they are performing as figures of knowledge and authority, placing their selves in position of power within the context of the focus group. Yambi claims not to fear the criminals because he can easily “spot” them, a doubtful assertion when he later admits that, “I shouldn’t quite generalise like that cause I’ve never been robbed.” His lack of intimate experience being the victim of crime subverts his stakes as an individual with knowledge and power. However, both him and Mthabisi dispense knowledges, however accurate or not, that they have gained through their two years in South Africa.

Interestingly, their knowledge and authority comes through direct experience with the field or terrain of South Africa and intimate encounters with violence and/or crime. These experiences and encounters “back up” their dispensed knowledge and provide details that testify to their authenticity and the power through which Yambi and Mthabisi discursively dominate both the focus group and their panoptic view of crime. These are embodied knowledges; information gained through bodily experience in the world, intimate exchanges between the bodies of Yambi and Mthabisi and the bodies of criminals in the South African space.

As such, Yambi and Mthabisi engage in providing a panoptic (Foucault, 1977) view of crime in South Africa (and, to some extent, Yambi’s description extends to his home country of Angola)<sup>10</sup>.

**Wisy:** [...] Cause I walked, like, to Pick n Pay in the day with my headphones, I didn’t really care. But I wouldn’t do that at night cause, you know, like, you don’t hear if someone’s following you and stuff. Not a chance.

**Thabang:** [unclear]

**Mthabisi:** It is. I also thought, the with headphones things, it’s an indication that the other guy’s got the latest of cell phones.

**Yambi:** Yeah, or an iPod.

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<sup>9</sup> Credit and thanks to Jane Bennett for this observation

<sup>10</sup> Credit and thanks to Jane Bennett for this point of analysis

And:

**Yambi:** [...] And I was a little afraid, because, you know, what I had heard from, you know, from the news and from people and stuff that it was dangerous in Johannesburg, and it was the most dangerous, um, city in the planet, and that kind of stuff. And, that also, I was anxious but at the same time excited because, you know, I just thought that it would be quite challenging for me. [...] But when I got here, it was a contrast. It was completely the opposite of what I had expected.

And:

**Yambi:** He just, yeah, so he won the fight whatever, and just walks up after all. You know. as nothing the matter. You know, and *slowly*. Before, you know, we're all looking at him, and he just walks slowly.

**Mthabisi:** Yeah, that's the problem, that's the problem.

**Yambi:** -[unclear] panicking.

**Mthabisi:** - Yeah, and you scream and scream and scream and they look at you and look aside-

**Yambi:** Yeah, exactly-

**Mthabisi:** As if they didn't see what's happening.

And finally:

**Yambi:** Yeah, I, I actually felt, I feel more comfortable walking around Cape Town or Johannesburg streets than I do walking back home. Because, I think, crime in South Africa is more violent. But then if you compare Luanda, which is our capital, to Johannesburg, right, there is more, um, specially, I don't know cause it's, it's really strange.

Through their two years living in Johannesburg prior to moving to Cape Town, Yambi and Mthabisi have embodied knowledge of crime in South Africa. They have seemingly discovered the secrets to how criminals operate, what they look like, and how to avoid becoming to victim of violence. They never engage in discourses like the women previously mentioned; their use of language never places them as a possible victim of crime. They have adopted the subjectivity of the experienced, knowledgeable masculinity – a man who has seen lots and avoided more through his wits and well-established interactions with perpetrators and the spaces they inhabit, spaces coded as “dangerous”. They constantly “riff” back and forth – bolster their stories through added details and affirmations from the other (**Mthabisi:** [...] And they look at you and look aside- / **Yambi:** Yeah, exactly). It is the rhetorical creation of a homosocial space for the two men to place themselves in positions of authority and power within the focus groups.

In conclusion, participants use the focus group space to create a picture of the South African crime scene. During this production, participants, particularly women, describe crime in South Africa as violent, often involving weapons, and resulting in bodily harm or death. Some women deploy such discourses that reproduce embodied notions of femininity as the inevitable victim of crime, from everyone and everywhere, despite their contradictory attempt to label and learn ways to mitigate vulnerability through “safe zones”. While many of the women saw everyone as a possible perpetrator, some men in the focus groups took this setting as a space to assert and adopt masculine subjectivities through discursively positioning themselves as authorities on South African crime, with the ability to “spot” criminals and understand how they operate.

#### 6.4 Subjectivities and Discourses of Fear

This section will focus on the way particular subjectivities, certain bodies on the street, feel vulnerable to crime in South Africa. I will focus on the use of discourses that perpetuate notions of femininity and masculinity as, respectively, vulnerable and impenetrable to crime as the participants use language that particularly implicates their gender in relation to their respective insecurity. In contrast to the earlier sections, which predominantly engaged with participants’ expression and use of knowledge and discourse to adopt positions of power, analysis here will focus on how participants explicitly use their gender in explanation of fear of crime. Furthermore, female participants, only those that have lived in Cape Town or South Africa before, notice and comment on public harassment on the street. Finally, for many participants, their status as “foreigners”, foreign bodies in this space, implicate them in fear of crime and possible xenophobic violence.

**Fabian:** To me, I’m a guy. So it’s been less of an issue for me because –

**Tessa:** Not even at night, just at any time?

**Fabian:** I’ve walked around at night. And I, OK, I don’t carry any valuables on me, so I’ve been feeling relatively safe. Um, but I think it would be different for a girl.

**Zina:** Oh it’s, oh wow.

**Sophie:** Yeah, it's unsafe.

When questioned about crime, walking around alone during the day or at night, Fabian, a first-year Namibian man, counters that it is simply “less of an issue” for him because he is “a guy”. This focus group was comprised of six Namibian students, all first-years, from Windhoek. Fabian was the only male present.

The argument that men and women fall into gendered heuristic techniques that reproduce essentialised beliefs of the body, particularly that women are more vulnerable to crime and, thus, fear it more, while men are less so, is well documented in gender, geography, and crime research (Valentine, 1992; Stanko, 1995; Mehta and Bondi, 1999; Pain, 2000, 2001; Day, 2001; Hollander, 2001; Lemanski, 2004; see also Pain, 1991).

The way in which the participants reproduced “discursive representations of women’s and men’s bodies.... [that] maintains and legitimates” (Saugeres, 2002: 641) gendered vulnerabilities to crime and thus regulations that impede the mobility of all, but particularly women. For example, in the above quote, Fabian explains that his mobility is available to him because of the apparent impenetrability of a masculine figure. However, he implies that he is not invincible to robbery (“And I, OK, I don’t carry any valuables on me”). Regardless, it is still “less of an issue.” The women in the focus group immediately concur. The implication is that women’s fear revolves around chaotic, public attacks. Even if they did not carry valuables, like Fabian, they would remain vulnerable in public spaces at night. The participants reflect embodied discourses of sexed differences that code male bodies as stronger and less vulnerable to crime, and women as constantly facing possible victimization and violently so.

**Joanne:** Um... safety-wise, I’m fine. Just like when we went to ... Long Street?

**Tessa:** Hmmm...

**Joanne:** Those people always come in and, “Please give a hundred rand,” but we’ve always had boys with us, so we’ve been fine.

Joanne describes the male bodies around her as protector figures. Not only are male bodies unassailable, socially they also serve as a protective force around the susceptible

female body.

**Mthabisi:** [...] And now there's this thing, I see a group of funny-looking guys coming this way, I simply changed direction, walk the other way. As fast as I can. But if it's a one-on-one situation, I won't.

**Yambi:** Yeah, that's good.

**Mthabisi:** I can stand up for myself and see.

Mthabisi's comments reflect the masculine construction in regards to safety – bodies that deflect attacks with counter-violence. For Mthabisi, he generally avoids becoming a victim by moving away, only if it is a large group coming after him. Otherwise, "I won't... I can stand up for myself." Yambi concurs, almost encourages this course. Again, the two engage in homosocial support of a hegemonic masculinity that defies crime with counter-violence. In this case and the first example (with Fabian, Zina and Sophie), participants enforce and legitimate these gendered reactions to fear of crime.

Furthermore, I wish to point to several examples from participants who noted instances of public harassment on South African streets. Without exception, those participants who brought up this as an issue, a point of difference from their home country, were females who had lived in South Africa longer than this "initial" moment of transition – anywhere between two years and two decades. It encompasses part of the "everyday, mundane" varieties of sexual violence against women, one that specifically targets women's public mobility.

**Zina:** It's not even black ones, just like the guys, "Hey, sisi!"

**Tuli:** Like the coloured guys-

**Tessa:** What is that?

**Tuli:** Very, I don't know, sexually frustrated.

[Laughter]

**Zina:** Like when they see a girl, it's like they've never seen a girl, so it's just like-wow.

**Tessa:** What do they say?

**Zina:** Just like, "Oh, you're sexy, marry me." And I'll just be like [unclear]... "Oh, I'm in love with you. You're the love of my life."

**Tuli:** Yeah, it's just, ah.

**Tessa:** Really?

**Zina:** Yeah.

**Tessa: What kinds of guys say these things?**

**Zina:** The dodgy ones.

Zina and Tuli, twin sisters from Namibia, lived in Johannesburg for two years until their first year of university in Cape Town. They describe here several ways in which men on the street interject themselves into women's spaces in public. Zina and Tuli specifically use racial and class categories to describe the perpetrators of street harassment - either coloured or black and "dodgy", implying low economic income and status.

**Kim:** Outside, like out of campus. Like even in all, like Observatory, everywhere. Like, guys will try to disturb you, like, every single minute. It's, like, if going to a shop, people inside the shop disturbing. You go out, people – it's, like, every single minute.

[...]

**Kim:** No, like, people who maybe fix the roads.

**Tessa: Oh, OK.**

**Kim:** Yeah, this kind of people. They'll go on and on and on and on and, like, "OK, we hear it." But when they, like, even not that, even people who look serious, they are, like, disturbing you over and over. And it creates that kind of fear in – like, in me, like, worrying a lot. Like, "Why are people like going on?"

[...]

**Kim:** It's like black, white, coloured, all of them. They go on and on and, like-

**Zoe:** Especially white people-

**Kim:** Even whites. Like, once, I was in Obs, Observatory. I went to a shop to buy shoes. I was walking, and this car just stopped. The white man came out and was like, "Are you Fre- Are you from Congo?" I'm like [pause] "Yeah." "Oh, bonjour!" I'm like, "Bonjour" [her replies in this conversation are demonstrably hesitant] "Comment ca va?" [How are you?] I'm like, "Bien." [Good]. "Do you want coffee?" I'm like, "Noo..." [group laughs] It's like, OK, [unclear]

[...]

**Zoe:** Just like hi, but they keep on saying that. Like, "Hi! Hi! Hi! Hey sisi! How are you?"

Sisters Zoe and Kim, from DRC by way of France, also describe similar occasions of public harassment on Cape Town streets. These stories are provoked through questions of differences in their former homes and this new context. However, it only seems to arise in the stories of participants who had lived in the new context for much longer than the month or six weeks of others. Unlike Zina and Tuli, Kim describes people from all socio-economic and racial backgrounds "disturbing" her, creating "that kind of fear in- like, in

me, like, worrying a lot.” Street harassment, as a form of gendered violence, provides a daily reminder of women’s perceived vulnerability in public spaces.

**Sthabile:** [...] Whereas here, it’s just, they’re just, always-

**Prashila:** Shouting

**Sthabile:** Open and honest. I shouldn’t say honest, it’s just rude. And, yeah, they’re just, they just, there seem to be no boundaries.

[...]

**Tessa:** Have you also experienced things similar, people like yelling at you on the street?

**Prashila:** Yes, yes, I have.

**Tessa:** What kinds of things were said or who were the people yelling?

**Prashila:** Um, people just like, you know when you walk past. I had a group of friends or something and this guy is just standing on the side. They’ll look you up and down and wait for you to pass and say, “Oh, hey baby! Honey!” Or whatever. Just, random things like that, yeah. You get that a lot here. [...]

Finally, I wish to indicate how participants’ status as a “foreign” body underlies some fear of crime and feelings of insecurity. While I will wrangle with the topic of “foreignness” more intricately in the next chapter, I wish to complicate these false demarcations a bit by bringing xenophobic experiences to this issue of insecurity. More so, however, I wish to point to the ways in which participants implicate their status as “foreigners” in both their knowledge of crime in South Africa, and how they embody “foreignness” in their reaction to crime.

Firstly, often in the focus groups when fears of xenophobia and resulting attacks would come up, ultimately another individual would qualify or discredit the fear through their knowledge of South African geography and the history of the attacks. A quintessential example:

**Christy:** And I also heard about the whole, I think it was last year, the xenophobia attacks.

[Lots of agreeing]

**Christy:** Yeah, that really freaked me out. Thinking, when I go to South Africa, and I hear they’re targeting foreigners. It’s like... scary, yeah.

**Ndayola:** Yeah.

**Zina:** That’s just Soweto, Alexandra.

Just as with other instances of crime, focus group participants use their knowledge to label certain areas in relation to “dangerousness”, through which they negotiate themselves into positions of authority and power with the space. Despite many participants bringing up fears of xenophobic attacks with the focus group, other forms of crime dominated the discourse. Yet, many participants implicate their embodiment of “foreignness” in regards to their reactions to crime.

**Mthabisi:** - Yeah, and you scream and scream and scream and they look at you and look aside-

**Yambi:** Yeah, exactly-

**Mthabisi:** As if they didn't see what's happening.

**Thabang:** That's the thing, what can you do? If you intervene, then somebody might just get shot.

**Mthabisi:** Exactly, you come from a different country-

**Thabang:** Exactly.

**Mthabisi:** There's some fight in you, and [unclear], but the people will just watch you-

**Yambi:** Yeah.

**Mthabisi:** And you fear for your life.

**Yambi:** I, uh, it's-

**Mthabisi:** After [unclear], I also look aside.

And:

**Thabang:** I think, I think as foreigners, we take note of these things more than we should type of thing, maybe because we're not used to it like you said earlier on, like because we're here just [unclear-learning] South Africa, you know. But, I guess, most people don't even know about this. They just, I don't know. So like, got to take care and stuff.

Thabang and Mthabisi, a Batswana woman and a Zimbabwean man respectively, implicate their “foreignness” in their reaction to crime. As foreign bodies entering the South African context, Thabang and Mthabisi believe they are more sensitive to discourses of insecurity and crime. The transition, the disruption of a “habitus” (Bourdieu, 1990), means they feel more aware.

Although the next chapter will further examine how participants relate their subjective



experiences of being a foreign body in South Africa to regulations of the body, it will also involve the underlying fear of crime through xenophobic attacks. Again, these chapters' demarcations are complicated and messy, with issues and threads blurring the lines. However, in conclusion, many participants invoke their particular subjectivities through the heuristic use of identities such as "women", "men", and "foreigner" when discussing their relative vulnerability to crime, reactions to public displays, and the discourse of harassment and violence. As such, the participants embody such discourses in how they mitigate their fear of crime and cope for mobility in the city. For example, Fabian adopts a masculine subjectivity that remains impervious to assault and thus walks around alone at night; yet, Joanne's complicity in reproducing discourses of the vulnerable female body and the protecting male body results in her seeking the shelter of men. Many female participants not within the moment of transition coded the public street as a scene of harassment directed at them and their feminine bodies:

**Tessa:** Have you noticed anything like this?

**Masuzyo:** Uhhh....

**Kim:** He wouldn't.

**Masuzyo:** I'm a boy.

Finally, the experience of being a "foreign" body within South Africa ties all my participants together. Within the focus group, many pointed to their status as "foreigners" within a context of xenophobic violence as increasing their feelings of insecurity in this space. Considering what it means to be a foreigner in South Africa brings us to the next chapter.

## 7. Language and Foreign Bodies

Moving from a chapter on the meaning of insecurity and into the experiences of embodying the “foreign”, sadly, fits well in the context of modern South Africa. As it has been well reported in the press (see AFP, 2008; Steenkamp, 2009), fears of violence arising from xenophobia have long been an experience of some bodies in South Africa. Indeed, much of the understanding of “dangerous” spaces, crime, and violence for the participants come from the discourses and experiences of *being* a “foreigner”. This contrasts to a more general fear of crime; however, as shown in the previous chapters, participants implicate their subjectivities (their *being* a woman, for example) toward an understanding of the meaning of crime and insecurity in South African spaces. As such, oftentimes this demarcation – between “general” insecurity and fear of xenophobic violence – was constructed through my own interpretation and analysis of the data.

Despite the constructedness of this line, I found that the participants subjective experiences and identities as foreigners and the embodiment of this subjectivity was constantly and anxiously woven through the uneasy knowledge of xenophobic sentiments and violence in South Africa. In my perspective, this is not the ideal entrance to this chapter’s findings. As described in my methodologies, I wished to highlight the agency and empowerment of such a marginalised group, show how despite such desperate fears and confusing times, participants navigate their way. However, I cannot fail to acknowledge the unfortunate reality in my data – fears and experiences of xenophobia are seemingly fundamental to the experience of foreign bodies in South Africa.

As such, I present this chapter of findings through the following sections: Xenophobia; Language and the “Reading” of Bodies; and Group Identity Abroad.

### 7.1 Xenophobia

**Tessa:** So, um, what did, what did you, what had you heard about South Africa before you came here? Before you decided to move to Cape Town?

**Noelene:** Ok, um, South Africa. Xenophobia.

**Tessa: Xenophobia?**

**Noelene:** Yeah, and all... seriously, I was thinking South Africa is such a harmful place.

Participants mentioned fears of xenophobia, personal experiences, and/or hearing of earlier incidences of violence against foreigners in every one of the seven focus groups. In this example, Noelene, a first-year female student from Harare, Zimbabwe, immediately associates the South African space with xenophobia. Not only does she label the space as xenophobic, thus hostile to foreigners, but also that the sentiments of the hostility result in harm and violence towards foreign bodies. Interestingly, it is not the people in South Africa that are xenophobic or harmful; it is the place, South Africa itself, which ultimately may bring harm. As such, it may be that Noelene is not so much afraid of certain people, perhaps those who harbour xenophobic feelings; instead, she fears the crossing into this space, bringing her foreign body across borders.

Within this section, we will see how certain spaces and bodies are marked as “xenophobic” while other bodies are marked as “foreign” and vulnerable to attack. These codes often fall along subjectivities and the ideology of certain bodies and spaces, predominantly along the categories of race and class. In this first section, I will provide examples from the data of the participants’ intimate experiences with xenophobia, which include either direct threats of violence (on one end of the spectrum) to feelings of hostility and disrespect. The second section will examine the ways in which participants describe xenophobia in South Africa, specifically racialising the violence and vulnerability. This ultimately serves to both implicate their own bodies with fear and insecurity and still distance their selves from the source of violence.

**7.1.1 Experiences**

Overall, six of 23 participants reported direct experiences with xenophobia in South Africa. While many said they heard of violence and at times directly felt threatened, none reported violence towards them as a result of their foreign status. The experiences of xenophobia ranged from verbal obscenities to feeling disrespected during a conversation.

Five of these six students, however, have lived in South Africa prior to 2010. For example, Mthabisi, a first-year male student from Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, lived in Hillbrow in Johannesburg for two years before moving to Cape Town to attend UCT. Kemi, a female student from Namibia, is in her second year at the university. Undoubtedly, the longer a foreigner remains in South Africa, the more likely one will encounter discrimination or violence. However, looking at these figures from another angle, of the seven participants who lived in South Africa for at least a year before our interview, five of them reported experiencing some level of xenophobia. As such, it is not only the *fear* of such hostility or violence that is fundamental to the foreign experience in this country; it seems for many foreign students, experiences of aggression are a reality of life within this context.

**Kemi:** Um, when I came here, I didn't really experience like the violence part, just, like they just, maybe the way they talk to you, yeah.

Kemi, a second-year Namibian student, offered two examples of xenophobic sentiments in her experience in South Africa. Here, she describes the ways in which “they” talk to her – they being black South Africans. She makes it clear that she believes the way they spoke to her was due to her status as a foreign citizen. She presents her own encounter seemingly within a scale of xenophobic hostility – the “violence part” on one end and her own incident somewhere on the same line. Couple this with Kemi’s second example:

**Kemi:** And I just, I, for one, I don't think they experience much people, the guys. But the thing is that, like, if they go to, to, those areas, like Mowbray or whatever, they actually, like, if you're walking at night, they're going to look at them differently than foreigners I suppose. They say foreigners are criminals. So, when they walk, like, when, when they take people walk close to foreigners [unclear] there for all. And I also, when I was going with my friend, I was going with my friend, like, she wanted to go, like, in a taxi. So, so the owner of the taxi was, was a foreigner. So, they told them that, “I don't think we should take this taxi. He's a foreigner.”

**Tessa: Were these South African friends?**

**Kemi:** Yes, they were South African friends. And she was, they were telling me that he's a foreigner; maybe we should take another taxi. And the way that they were very cautious, sitting in the car, you know. But if it was a South African, they wouldn't be like that.

According to Kemi, South Africans code foreign men as criminals. To illustrate this, she provides the story of her friend and the taxicab driver<sup>11</sup>. This experience with xenophobia is somewhat removed from her own body. She begins the story by explaining that male foreigners are coded as criminals by South Africans – as a foreign woman, she is not directly associated with that “reading”. Regardless, a *friend* expressing such stereotyped, prejudicial sentiments would undoubtedly reinforce one’s interpretation of South Africa as a xenophobic place. Despite not being the direct target of hostility, Kemi’s example shows she perceives a general discourse of xenophobia and distrust of foreign citizens. Being a foreign body amid such aggressive and constantly reproduced discourses obviously elicits great anxiety for this participant. She brought up this story, perhaps seemingly minor in the scope of violence, to illustrate her perception of how South Africans view foreign citizens.

Noelene, a first-year female student from Harare, Zimbabwe, was the only participant who shared a story of xenophobic hostility that had not lived in South Africa for at least a year. She describes an incident in Polokwane, the largest city in Limpopo province with about 500,000 people and situated about 200 kilometres from the Zimbabwean border. Zimbabwean participants often mentioned Polokwane as a city they were familiar with due to family shopping trips. Being so close to the border, one could imagine there are many Zimbabweans who live or have visited Polokwane, especially in light of the food shortages two years ago.

**Noelene:** There, it’s like, you go there, and, like, this incident, we got to - when I was applying to come to UCT – we got to the Post Office. And then we asked, “Where can we get stamps and envelopes, and where can we go if we need to do this and this?” And then the man just kept looking at us, and then he told me, “Ask me again,” and then he starts speaking in his language. And then we were like, “We don’t understand what you’re saying.” And then he kept speaking in his language. And then he said, “If you don’t understand, just go to the other side.” Where were we supposed to go? That was the information - that’s the queries desk.

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<sup>11</sup> I am unsure if she is referring to a taxi, the white 16-seater buses used as public transportation, or a private metered cab.

Noelene's example illustrates a theme that will emerge more fully in the next section - that of the divisive use of language in "Othering" (Said, 1978) the foreign citizens in South Africa. First, while the man in Noelene's story does not directly attribute his rude behaviour to their status as foreign citizens, obviously Noelene does. She perceives and presents this story as an example of the way some people in South Africa, particularly in Polokwane, antagonise foreigners<sup>12</sup>. Because Noelene and her family could not speak the local language, because they were foreign and did not understand, the man at the Post Office essentially refused to help them. He used language to both identify them as foreign citizens, antagonise them by continually addressing them only in his language, and then refuse service.

Kim and Zoe, two sisters originally from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, have lived in France for the majority of their lives. Kim came to South Africa several years ago to attend Plumstead High School and is in her second year at UCT. Zoe, the younger of the two, just arrived in 2010 to attend UCT in her first year.

**Kim:** They [parents] were like really worried. But, we haven't experienced the violence part, but we have experienced the other part of it. [...] But when we speak, they can hear, like, we have a different accent, and they start treating you differently. Not the whites or the coloureds, the black. Like, when we come, like, the way you speak, you act, maybe they think you are all that. I heard that they call us 'coconut.' [Kim and sister Zoe laugh] I don't know.

In a discussion of xenophobia, Kim uses similar language to Kemi (who was in the same focus group) to explain how they have experienced this "other part of [xenophobia]". She pointedly directs the source of xenophobia to black South Africans, who "start treating you differently" when they hear the sisters' French accents. In this case, the accent is not disparaged, as Bourdieu (1991) contended, for its failure to reflect the "standard" English, but instead becomes a symbol of the sisters' foreign status. Again, language becomes weighted by this symbolism – an indicator for South Africans of whether or not this person "belongs" within the borders. Kim points to other indicators of her bodily

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<sup>12</sup> Earlier in the focus group, Noelene described the actions of the people in Polokwane to her and her family as follows: "They look at you with that face, and all watching you. So it was just, it was really hectic."

performance (“the way you speak, you act”) that are measured as not “belonging”, not South African. As such she is referred to as a “coconut” – “black on the outside, white on the inside” is how that term is often described (McKinney, 2007). Kim and her sister clearly present themselves as black women; why “white on the inside”? Their performance as black women does not reflect the standard or norm constructed in South Africa – their “foreign” accents, their bodily performance symbolises their apparent “difference”, which is instead deemed a “white” performance. Because her performance is different from the constructed norm, it is “white”. Why “white”? Not only is her performance different, but also according to Kim, it is perceived “maybe you think you are all that”. Kim’s embodied presentation and performance (the accent, the way she acts and speaks) is viewed as possibly conceited – as an arrogance of an individual that thinks they are better than others. In a society of racialised oppression, a performance perceived as reproducing a hierarchy – where an individual “acts” better than others – cues the embedded racial categories of South Africa. Someone “acting” better than others through her bodily performance and accent is deemed “acting white” (McKinney, 2007).

Yet, why is this considered xenophobia? “Coconut” and being derided as “acting white” is often thrown at other South Africans as well. Bodily performances, accents, “sets of habits” (Diprose, 1994) are all cultivated in a particular context and setting. For these two women, that was in Paris, France. Their performance is part of their *embodied nationality* – the ways in which we carry our “home” through, of course, accents, but also our “habitus” (Bourdieu, 1990). A bodily performance and “habits” rewarded and accepted in one context, then becomes performed in another to, at times, mixed results; sometimes, for example, accents are seen as alluring and manners very appealing in a new context. However, in this case, her accent, performance, or the ways she acts is viewed as unacceptable to the constructed standards of being a black woman in South Africa. The insult of “coconut” and the way she claims she was treated is a direct result of the reception of her embodied nationality, her “foreignness” in this terrain.

Finally, Kim’s story brings up an issue that I will analyse further in this section – participants often associate xenophobic sentiments and violence as arising from black

South Africans.

The final example of xenophobia from participants is in the words of Mthabisi, a first-year Zimbabwean man. Mthabisi lived in Johannesburg for two years in the Hillbrow area prior to beginning his studies at UCT.

**Mthabisi:** I guess you guys are more lucky. Like, for me, you know, if someone approached me in the beginning of this xenophobia thing, he'll just [unclear], and I'll say, "I just don't understand." I think I'd get called *Kwerekwere*. I think you know this obscene term?

**Tessa:** Oh, yeah.

**Mthabisi:** Oh, yeah, and people, ah! Get called *Kwerekwere* or something like that. But, I think, for most of the Zimbabweans, it was quite motivating to understand Setho and Tswana and all that stuff.

Mthabisi's story describes a confrontation that again directly implicates language acquisition. Languages are used to ascertain nationality, in a similar manner to Noelene's story. Once this anonymous figure in this case realised that Mthabisi did not understand the language (which, one assumes a South African would understand), he hurled an obscenity at him, one that specifically insults foreign citizens in South Africa (Culbertson, 2009). As languages become a technique for xenophobic South Africans to determine an individual's foreign status, Mthabisi reflects how those targeted also use language to subvert these tactics ("it was quite motivating to understand Setho and Tswana and all that stuff"). If languages indicate one is "foreign", then naturally foreign citizens try to learn those languages to "pass" as South Africans. I will present and analyse this use of language to "pass" in a later section.

While Mthabisi claims the insult is common ("and people, ah! Get called *Kwerekwere* or something like that"), their use is concretely xenophobic. While it may not be on the same level as the violence, aggression, and attacks witnessed in 2008 (AFP, 2008), the goal is to still direct hostility at a foreign body. The result being that the individual is not only made to feel merely anxious, but become confronted with the materiality of his or her body. It is a foreign body, the body that does not *belong*. Materiality of a body is also confronted when insults are also perceived to be threats of violence and bodily harm.



With the underlying knowledge of the vicious attacks in 2008, being called “Kwerekwere” can make one very uncomfortable indeed.

### 7.1.2 Racialised/Class-Based Imagery of Xenophobia

The majority of participants had not directly experienced xenophobia, but most of them had heard of it. From stories from their parents to news media articles and explanations from friends already in South Africa, most of the participants had constructed some idea of what xenophobia and xenophobic violence in South Africa looked like. However, all these narratives of xenophobia and the imagery the participants described invoked very particular racialised and class-based depictions of hostility towards foreigners.

An exchange within one focus group describes it very succinctly. This group was composed of six Namibian students – five women and one man – who all came from Windhoek, Namibia. Two participants, sisters Zina and Tuli, had lived in Johannesburg for two years to attend high school before arriving in Cape Town.

**Fabian:** It was the black South Africans targeting black, black-

**Zina:** Foreign.

**Fabian:** Other, black foreigners.

**Zina:** They would have-

**Fabian:** Yeah, sorry.

**Zina:** So you can't necessarily say it's xenophobia, cause they weren't anything against white foreigners. English, um-

**Christy:** Cause if you're a white foreigner, you're a tourist.

**Zina:** From USA.

**Ndayola:** Black foreigner you're a ... yeah.

Black South Africans targeting other black Africans – this was the dominant narrative from the participants of xenophobic violence in South Africa. While white individuals constructed as “tourists” are not targets of violence, all black individuals are perceived as possible victims. While participants described similar images, they often also employed these narratives to distance themselves as the possible targets of attack. However, despite their best attempts at removing themselves from this narrative, anxiety and fear lay

underneath. With few exceptions, all the participants were black Africans; the materiality of their own bodies implies their own possible victimization within this imagery.

**Wandile:** And my aunt had been like, you know the thing is they attack mostly the Nigerians, Somalians and things like that. [...] So she was like, with us, we shouldn't feel afraid like they will attack us and things like that. And plus, these things were happening in the townships. More than the schools. It was happening in the schools, too, but mostly the townships. So, she was like, "You shouldn't be scared of anything," and things like that. But there were a lot of fears when it happened at the time.

Wandile, a first-year female student from Swaziland, repeats the impressions and conceptions of xenophobic violence from her aunt. Her description is among those that attempt to remove herself as a possible victim. She mentions Nigerians and Somalians as those being attacked – not Swazi like herself. Furthermore, she spatialises the xenophobia, removing it from all of South Africa (as Noelene described earlier<sup>13</sup>) to specifically located within townships, away from the southern suburbs of Rondebosch where Wandile lives. Following apartheid, neighbourhoods and locations in South Africa, especially when invoking townships – areas demarcated under the racist system for "Black" and "Coloured" people - cradle racialised imagery. Geographically, these spaces are far away from her own existence as a student living in the suburbs of Cape Town. Yet, Wandile's concession in mentioning some violence within schools reveals her uncertainty and the tension underlying discussions of xenophobia as a black African foreign student. As such, she concedes that despite the reassurances from her aunt, "There were a lot of fears when it happened."

Interestingly, in the same focus group was Joanne, a first-year female student from Mauritius. Joanne was the only white participant in the focus groups.

**Tessa:** Oh. The one thing I wanted to ask about, was like, xenophobia and stuff. Cause I know that the attacks about 18 months ago, 2 years ago now, kind of ... when I arrived here, everyone was still talking about it.  
**Joanne:** What attacks?

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<sup>13</sup> **Noelene:** Yeah, and all... seriously, I was thinking South Africa is such a harmful place.

I am not wishing to deride Joanne for her ignorance of the events two years ago. However, I found it interesting that the only participant who responded in that way was white. She had no idea that there were attacks against foreign citizens and threats of xenophobia in South Africa. However, in following the narrative often presented through the participants, it is not surprising. As a white foreign body in this narrative, the discourse does not implicate her as a possible victim of xenophobia. The materiality of her body places her within the narrative as a foreign tourist. Her ignorance reinforces that notion – her lack of knowledge and concern about her personal safety in the context of xenophobia does not subvert, but rather supports, the imagery of vulnerable foreign bodies as limited to black Africans.

Fabian, a first-year Namibian man, explains why he does not necessarily fear xenophobic violence.

**Fabian:** Yeah, but also because of, the circumstances around that, it was more in poorer neighbourhoods. And if you were in town and you were with proper people or just alone, yeah, I think then you wouldn't be in too much risk.  
[Some agreeing from group]

Reiterating Wandile's spatialised depiction of hostility, Fabian describes the spaces in which xenophobia and aggression arises as "poorer neighbourhoods". Poverty in South Africa is, with few exceptions, largely black (May, 1998)<sup>14</sup>. While post-apartheid economic policies have, to some degree, desegregated middle class and wealthy sectors, poverty remains a social class almost entirely encompassed by black South Africans<sup>15</sup>. Avoiding poorer neighbourhoods as a technique to avoid xenophobia implies the aggressors of violence are poor and black. As Fabian said before<sup>16</sup>, his construction, following this imagery and narrative, of a xenophobic attacker is poor, black, and living in a township.

<sup>14</sup> May describes, "Poverty is not confined to any one race group, but is concentrated among blacks, particularly Africans: 61% of Africans and 38% of Coloureds are poor, compared with 5% of Indians and 1% of Whites (1998: 2-3).

<sup>15</sup> According to Woolard (2002), black South Africans comprise 95% of the poor population in the country.

<sup>16</sup> **Fabian:** It was the black South Africans targeting black, black-

Wandile echoes this spatialisation of xenophobia, thus its racial and class narrative:

**Wandile:** Yeah, they told me it's like in, on the rise in certain places like Alexandria, which is in Joburg. Because they see that they can't speak their language, so they just come at night and burn your house down and if you try to escape, then they'll slash you with the, those bush knives.

Again, perpetrators are black South Africans and living in townships (Alexandria, in this case<sup>17</sup>). Furthermore, Wandile invokes the exceedingly violent depictions of xenophobic attacks, which contrast greatly from the scope of hostility experienced by participants themselves. However, as the previous chapter on fear of crime shows, despite how rare such instances may be, fear of crime (and in this case, xenophobic crime) is often more aptly described as a fear of violence, bodily injury, and murder. Violence and death comprise participants' fears far more often than they occur in their experiences. Despite participants comparably mild experiences with hostility, violence, assault, and deadly aggression remain bedrock to fears, fuelling anxiety even when merely treated differently as a foreign citizen.

As such, I present this material on two counts: First, to simply reflect on the experiences and fears of participants, and, second, to indicate how in the context of South Africa, these fears and experiences of xenophobia remain a fundamental aspect of being a foreign body in this space. Furthermore, the racialised and class-based narratives of xenophobia seem to persist despite researchers' assertions that xenophobia in South Africa cuts across all racial and economic categories (Steenkamp, 2009).

## 7.2 Language and “Reading” Bodies

As already indicated in the previous section, language – one's knowledge and use of it or failure to understand – becomes, what I argue, the most powerful tool in “reading” foreign bodies. I believe the data presented within this section will show how language is the absolute crux of a performance regarding the “status” as foreign. Language reveals

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<sup>17</sup> According to the Agence-France Press (2008), Alexandria (also called Alexandra) was the site of many vicious attacks that left scores dead.

that one does not “belong”; it serves to connect “foreign” bodies abroad; and becomes a tool of “passing” as South African.

### 7.2.1 Mis-“Reading” and Exclusion

In this section, I will use the data to demonstrate the ostracizing and exclusionary role of language. There is a moment many participants described that I have also experienced when living in a foreign country: The moment a local resident addresses you in their home language, one you do not understand. This moment is particularly salient in South Africa, where one may encounter any of the 11 national languages.

**Wisy:** Yeah, I think I, ah, it really depends on like the individual. Cause like some people approach me, and they start talking Xhosa. And I’m like, “Ah, I should know some, but.” So I don’t speak, but they continue speaking, and I’m like, “I don’t speak Xhosa, sir.” And then they’re like, “Ohh, you’re not from here,” and I’m like, “Ahh, no.” “Where you from?” “Oh, I’m from there.”

And:

**Thabang:** Well, for me, because I, I’m light in complexion and everything, usually people come up to me and start speaking in Afrikaans, you know. *A di praat*, I can speak English. [Some laughs] Yeah, I’m learning Zulu. Just a little bit here and there, so yeah, sometimes people will come up to you, talk to you, speaking different languages. Like, oh, ok, so I do kind of fit in somewhere and stuff.

Thabang, a first-year Batswana woman, and Wisy, a first-year Namibian man, were in the same focus group. Addressing someone in a particular language is also an allusion to the “reading” of his or her body. In South Africa, languages are associated with particular racial categories – English is a white home language, Afrikaans is spoken at home by white and coloured South Africans, and the nine remaining languages (including Xhosa, Zulu, Sesotho, Swazi, Tswana, Ndebele, among others<sup>18</sup>) are used at home in black families. Indeed, Zulu is the South African language most predominantly spoken at home

<sup>18</sup> A complete list includes, in order of the popularity of their usage in South African homes, IsiZulu, IsiXhosa, Afrikaans, Sepedi, Setswana, English, Sesotho, Xitsonga, SiSwati, Tshivenda and IsiNdebele (Painter, 2010).

(Painter, 2010). As a result, when an individual addresses another, they based the selection of languages upon a “reading” of the person’s racial subjectivity. As a white person, I have been addressed in Afrikaans in the rural areas of the Western Cape. Wisy, read as black, is addressed in Xhosa; Thabang directly associates the “reading” of her skin (“I’m light in complexion and everything”) as she is interpreted – perceived as coloured, she is addressed in Afrikaans.

However, these perceptions and “readings” are not always correct; and, in the case of the participants, the associated language is not one they understand. The result, as Thabang demonstrates, is a realisation of the meaning of the materiality of her body – how her skin colour is received in this context. Her body, in this transition and migration to South Africa, now comes under the new racial discourses in this context. It is also an immediate acknowledgement of one’s foreign status. Thabang comments that being addressed in local languages makes her feel like she does “fit in somewhere.” But is that here? While being addressed in local languages makes her feel like her material body is one that fits in South Africa, she does not understand what is said to her. It is a contradiction of being recognised and “read” in terms of local discourses of racial categories and yet, as Wisy commented to the speaker, “I don’t speak Xhosa, sir [...] I’m from there.”<sup>19</sup>

Data from Kim’s story demonstrates more clearly how “readings” of race on the body and the constructions of that race in local terms and its connection to local languages can result in the exclusionary and ostracizing power of language in South Africa.

**Kim:** Like, once when I was with a friend, she was like complaining. She was like “You speak French?” And I’m like, “Yeah.” “No, you speak English.” I’m like, “Yeah.” “Why don’t you speak Xhosa?” I’m like, “Why should I speak Xhosa?” “No, but you’re black.” I’m like, “Yeah, but why should I speak Xhosa? I don’t have to.” And then they go on about this Xhosa thing. I’m like, “Why do we need to speak Xhosa? Like, even if I’m black, like would you tell a French white person to speak Xhosa? Why do I need to speak Xhosa?”

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<sup>19</sup> A personal story also reflects how individuals’ bodies in migration are judged within local racial discourses. A friend visiting from the United States came to South Africa during June 2010. He is originally from Guatemala, and in the United States, he is considered Hispanic. However, while in South Africa, he experienced many local coloured men speaking to him in Afrikaans – they “read” his body as coloured.

Because Kim presents herself, and is “read”, as black in South Africa, her friend questions why she does not speak Xhosa. As someone who was born in the DRC, raised in France, Kim would likely never have had interactions with Xhosa-speakers until she came to Cape Town for high school. She pointedly remarks that a “French white person” would not be asked to speak Xhosa. The South African construction of “black” includes knowledge of a local African language<sup>20</sup>. For Kim, as a black woman in Cape Town, the friend believes she should speak Xhosa. In failing to do so, the friend questions Kim’s racial subjectivity in its South African construction, but also alludes to her status as a foreign citizen, the body that does not belong.

Another instance demonstrating language’s power to ostracize and exclude is in situations in which the foreign citizen encounters a group of South Africans speaking a local language they do not know.

**Sthabile:** Well, to be honest, I don’t know whether it’s just me in my own, maybe, paranoia. But I’ve always felt that kind of ... um. Feeling like an outcast because-

**Prashila:** That’s true, that’s true.

**Sthabile:** -um, once, especially at school cause-

**Tessa:** Here at UCT?

**Sthabile:** No, not at this school. At high school, back in Joburg. I was the only foreign person of colour within my ethnic group, the rest of them were South African, and they would just start speaking Zulu and what not. And I can kind of understand it, because I’ve been here for so long, but it just puts you in the perimeter, and they don’t realise they’re actually pushing you out, pushing you away, so yeah. I, yeah, kinda felt like an outcast sometimes.

And:

**Wisya:** And then I can be like, cause I, like a group of people walk among you in a party or something, and they speak a language you don’t understand. And then

<sup>20</sup> I say knowledge of a local African language instead of one of the nine South African languages. While xenophobic sentiments of the last years pushes other African black individuals to perhaps “pass” as South African through acquisition of Zulu or Xhosa (or Setho or Tswana, as Mthabisi says) to avoid violence, I do not believe they would be questioned in the same manner if they spoke English, French, and Shona, for example. In that case, I imagine their racial identity would not be questioned in relation to their knowledge and proficiency in language.

you're like, you get that doubt, are they talking about me or not? Even if they're not talking about you, like, OK, something's up, you know. Yeah, like, I just want to learn a language, home language, and then, you know, actually fit in a bit.

And:

**Dorothy:** So like, some of the.... South African students who I've met will be like, "Ah, I'm tired of speaking English."

**Patrick:** [laughs]

**Dorothy:** Like, "Ha! I'm just tired." And they'll spend the rest of the evening just speaking their language. And I'm sitting there at the table like, "Yeah, Ok."

Moving into a space where one does not speak the local language ultimately creates situations for the foreign citizen to feel ostracised and excluded. Here, with Wisy, Dorothy and Sthabile, we see three instances of this. Wisy is a first-year male student from Namibia; Dorothy is a first-year Zimbabwean woman; and Sthabile is originally from Zambia, although she lived in England for a few years prior to her family moving to South Africa in 1994. The first two participants describe situations at the university, while Sthabile is referring to her high school in Johannesburg.

Being, as she describes, a person of colour in high school who does not speak Zulu, Sthabile feels "on the outside", pushed away by her peers because she does not know the language. A discursive sphere is constructed around the use of language, demarcating between those of a specific ethnic group from those outside. In this case, her peers' usage of Zulu in her presence, despite their best intentions, make her feel like "an outcast". As such, language is the crux of feeling like a foreigner through its exclusionary capabilities.

Wisy and Dorothy, on the other hand, have both just moved to South Africa within six weeks of their interviews. Wisy describes his anxiety in not knowing a local language at parties because of the possibility that someone is talking about him. His anxiety and feelings of exclusion is seated not merely because he does not understand, but because of the possible *content* of that language. He also explains how he wants to learn a "home language" to "fit in". The intimation being that in not knowing a local language, he does not and will not "fit in" – as a foreign body, he does not belong.



Finally, Dorothy's story also invokes the image of the odd person out, sitting on the outside of a sphere of common understanding. Her peers get "tired of speaking English" and switch to "their language", an opportunity she does not have as the lone Shona-speaking Zimbabwean at the dinner table. She also feels excluded and uncomfortable in her lack of common language with her friends ("And I'm like, 'Ah, OK.'"). While the "switching" is very understandable for second-language English speakers, the reality for Dorothy is that she is removed from the conversation, ostracised from her peers because of her foreignness.

### 7.2.2 Connection and Recognition

Despite the ways in which language may serve to exclude foreign citizens and amplify feelings of "being foreign", it may also serve to connect. Hearing one's own home language in another country allows the participants to recognise that individual and their shared home. Also, while hearing a language one does not understand serves to exclude, foreign citizens use their own home languages in the same way – to remove themselves into a sphere of common understand outside of the larger social terrain in a different country. While I will briefly examine this latter use of home languages in a foreign country, I will analyse it further in the next section on Group Identity Abroad.

**Patrick:** [...] And some cab guy he came to me speaking Shona and was like, "Do you need a ride?" I didn't say anything. He just started talking to me in Shona.

The data from Patrick's comment clearly resembles much from the previous chapter. In this scenario, a taxicab driver correctly "reads" Patrick as a Zimbabwean man (even more so, a Shona-speaking Zimbabwean) and addresses him in the appropriate language. In contrast, however, the "reading" and use of language connects the two individuals rather than serving to "Other" Patrick. The moment of two individuals of the same nationality recognizing each other in a foreign space will be examined more fully in the next section. However, in being "read correctly" and addressed in his home language, language served

to recognise and acknowledge Patrick in his first moments in South Africa<sup>21</sup>.

Mthabisi, a Zimbabwean man, uses language in the same fashion – to recognise others as Zimbabwean. He describes how he came to know, what he claimed, that many criminals in Johannesburg were Zimbabwean.

**Mthabisi:** Yeah, that's why I'm saying I think maybe they're from Zimbabwe cause you can tell from, from the accent that these guys are from my own country, they are from-

Mthabisi had earlier stated that he could change his accent in Ndebele slightly to be understood and accepted as Zulu<sup>22</sup>. However, in this case, the accents of “these guys” reveal them as Zimbabwean Ndebele speakers.

**Dorothy:** For me, it's not spotting them. It's hearing them. You can just hear Zimbabweans.

**Tessa: The accent?**

**Dorothy:** No, like they'll be speaking properly and then they'll add a Zimbabwean word. Like, let's say I'm speaking to you, and I could say “kuti.” That's like a word in Zimbabwe, which is ... just comes naturally. And you can hear that.

**Tessa: Kind of like slang?**

**Kudzai:** Like just mixing English with a common Shona word. You don't even think about it.

These three examples demonstrate the ways in which language may serve to recognise individuals from similar nations and countries of origin. However, more often in this study, the mere recognition of a common nationality or common language became an avenue for the creation of a sphere of understanding and group identity within the foreign context. In the next chapter, I will use the data to explore how language serves as a foundation for the creation of group identity abroad.

<sup>21</sup> In the focus group, Patrick explained that he had taken a bus from Harare to Cape Town. The taxi-driver speaking to him in Shona was in the first moments after he stepped off the bus at the Cape Town Bus Station.

<sup>22</sup> **Mthabisi:** Similar, very similar, so I can always change my accent and talk in Zulu, and I'll pass for any South African Zulu.

### 7.2.3 Embodied Nationality

So how are bodies “read” and how do participants “read” other bodies? From the data, and my own personal interaction as a body crossing borders, “reading” appears to be a highly dynamic interpretation, an almost unconscious process of responding in the familiarity of a body and its performance, recognizing it amid other embodied nationalities in a foreign space.

In this section, I am referring to the “reading” of bodies in ways that are not necessarily simply racial interpretations. While interpretations of racial categories ultimately do figure into the “reading” of embodied nationalities<sup>23</sup>, there are far more nuanced examinations going on in the single glances. Everything from clothes to walk, hairstyles, facial features, manners of speech – these are all “sets of habits” (Diprose, 1994) that bodies display, formed in specific contexts and nation-states, that reflect an embodied nationality.

Within every “reading” of the body, there are two figures involved – the “reader” and the body. Within the context of migration and transition, the South African “reader” may not be able to notice the subtle embodied differences displayed between, for example, a Zimbabwean and a Batswana woman. For that “reader”, they may simply interpret the body as “foreign”. However, in the data provided through the participants’ focus group interviews, many describe the ways in which they notice individuals from their own country – where both figures embody the same nationality.

**Patrick:** But now... now I can kinda see it. I mean, I’m not always right, but there are times that I can see by the way someone dresses that they’re Zimbabwean. Cause Zimbabweans are more, usually, they’re more conservative. Like especially guys. Guys you can always tell. It’s always jeans and the short shorn. It’s rare to see a Zimbabwean with a mohawk or... I mean, you’ll see them with relaxed hair or what not. And you can see a mohawk here or there, but usually the majority of us are clean cut and just sneakers and jeans and shirt. Not really into shorts. You can just tell, I don’t know. Maybe it’s a guy thing, but you can tell.

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<sup>23</sup> I would argue that it would be easier to “read” and categorise individuals of more homogenous countries.

Patrick, a first-year Zimbabwean man, describes the style of dress of Zimbabweans through which he “can always tell”. Interestingly, this is the recognition and sighting of a person from the same country of origin within a vastly different context, the picking out of a familiar body within a sea of “different” ones. Patrick is “spotting” Zimbabweans in Cape Town. He describes the indicators of the Zimbabwean embodied nationality – jeans, short hair, conservative style, sneakers, and “clean cut”. He is also only describing men’s styles from Zimbabwe. In consideration of Butler’s (1990) arguments of “performativity”, Patrick would naturally be more observant of men’s styles as he is using them perhaps as models of a masculine performance. Manners and styles of dress in one’s home country, what may be extremely familiar and considered a norm, often “stick out” within a foreign context during migration.

**Ndayola:** Sometimes you just know when someone's not from there...

**Zina:** South Africans know.

**Ndayola:** Yeah, yeah, I’ve heard that a lot.

**Zina:** They can just see like features, maybe. I don’t know.

And:

**Mthabisi:** I’ll give credit to the cops, the SAPS. Those guys are good at spotting a Zimbabwean.

**Tessa: Really?**

[Some giggles from the group]

**Mthabisi:** Good at a Zimbabwean two Ks away.

The first quote is taken from the focus group of six Namibian students; Ndayola had arrived within the last six weeks of the interview, and Zina had lived in Johannesburg for two years prior. In this comment, they consider the perception of difference for the anonymous and abstract “reader”, but specifically, a South African. According to these women, South Africans know easily when someone is “not from there.” They are skilled at this process of “reading” bodies and spotting the isolated “foreign” body amid locals. Underlying this comment is the question of why and for what purpose. Why are South Africans particularly skillful at identifying “foreign” bodies? Moreover, if so, and in the context of fear of xenophobic attacks, what do South Africans do with this skill? Zina

claims South Africans notice the features of non-South Africans. In taking their claims of South Africans – in being skilled at “spotting” the body that does not belong – as “truth”, there are many ways to explain this. One being that under a system of apartheid, a racist regime particularly focused on segregation and the removal of certain bodies, South Africans perhaps built a habit of “spotting” and “reading” bodies for their differences.

Mthabisi agrees in that South Africans – in this case the South African Police Service – “are good at spotting a Zimbabwean” even from “two Ks away”. If South Africans are good at “spotting”, then there must be something to “spot” – even from a distance of two kilometres, an embodied nationality must be visibly evident. Interestingly, Mthabisi points to a very material way in which his embodied nationality is evident (although, likely not from a distance of two kilometres).

**Mthabisi:** [...] But then, Mugabe, as a clever man as he is, you know what, he gave us this thing [lifts up arm of shirt to show scar on his bicep].

**Yambi:** Oh, yeah.

**Mthabisi:** Yeah, this injection.

**Tessa: What is that?**

**Mthabisi:** Like this injection.

**Tessa: Ohhhh.**

**Mthabisi:** All Zimbabweans have this-  
[...]

**Mthabisi:** Yeah, yeah, so if they are Zimbabwean, whether black, white, yellow, pink, they have this. So even if you do that sometimes, you just- even if you have an ID, you are caught, just because of this. “Ah, you are Zimbabwean, you are going.” But for us, I can easily pass for Zulu South Africa. But if they go here, well, I am caught.

Regardless of accent, posturing, clothing styles, or the other means through which embodied nationalities become evident, Mthabisi will always have the scar of his injection on his upper arm. Through actions of the state (Mthabisi implicates Robert Mugabe, Zimbabwe’s president of the last 30 years), bodies are marked by their nationality. This example, although rare in the focus groups, succinctly shows how the people within the borders of a nation-state can be identified through the materiality of their bodies.

**Noelene:** Like, um, Zimbabweans. Um... I don't know, they just have got these distinct features, and I can tell that that face is really Zimbabwean, and just sometimes by the way they act. Most of them, you know, their environment is so different, so we start quiet, just you get into the bit chirpy at times sitting on your own if you're not walking with another Zimbabwean. And all that stuff. Trying to get used to the, you know, the environment, so I can tell that that's Zimbabwean.

**Tessa: Someone who's a little quieter? But you said something about the face?**

**Noelene:** Yeah! They have distinct feature, features you can tell that, I'm not sure what, but I can just tell, oh that's Zimbabwean.

Noelene's description also employs these embodied performances that reflect a shared nationality. Facial features, performances in the new context, they all coalesce to inform a "reader" of the individual's country of origin. Noelene, like Zina and Ndayola before, qualifies her assertions by explaining her uncertainty of *how* she knows ("I'm not sure what, but I can just tell"). The reading of another person's embodied nationality may not always be so distinct and defined as Mthabisi's scar. As such, I described the process as dynamic and often unconscious. The "reading" of bodies is often uncertain, compared against the "reader's" personal experiences in their country of origin, their experiences within the world at large, and their perceptions of how bodies interact with others. It is an unconscious phenomenon of recognition, perhaps heightened when one makes a transition to a new context in which everything seems different and new. Thus, the old and familiar becomes very apparent. Kemi, a second-year Namibian woman, describes her initial discomfort in Cape Town when she migrated the year before.

**Kemi:** [...] And you know I found it difficult when I first came. I didn't even know which [unclear-door] to enter cause it was very big and you could easily get lost and, um, you tend to get scared. Not really scared, but, you don't feel that free to just ask people around cause they all look strange. The whole, yeah, and you don't really feel free. Yeah.

[...]

**Kemi:** Well, I don't know what looks strange about them. It's not how they dress. They dress the same, but something is just -

**Zoe:** The way they are looking at you?

**Kemi:** Probably, I don't know really exactly. I can't pinpoint it, the thing, but I can see that. You know, these people are just strange.

While she did not "spot" other Namibians in this description, her comments point to the

ways in which bodies can reflect their surroundings. For Kemi, she felt scared in the new space because the people “all look strange.” Their manners, speech, and actions perhaps differed greatly from those in Namibia. She even directly says it is not their dress – “They dress the same”. However, what differed and made them “look strange” was that these were not Namibian bodies, but South African, who did not engage with the world and interact in ways she was familiar. Again, like Noelene, Ndayola, and Zina, she “can’t pinpoint it, the thing, but I can see that”. Unlike other performances (such as gender, age, and race), perhaps these embodied nationalities are a far more subtle engagement in contexts, a more unconscious and faint marking of bodies, readable only by the most astute observer.

On a final note, as participants engage with the concept of “reading” bodies for the country of origin, they are also exuding an internalized discourse of what “being” Zimbabwean or “being” Namibian means. They have internalized a dominant narrative of what it means to be a citizen of their home country – what one looks like as a Swazi or a Batswana. These internalised discourses are what they perceive in others. It is unlikely that participants are noting every citizen in South Africa from their home country. As an example, I will use a personal story to illustrate this. In South Africa, I have an American friend who is of Korean descent. Many times, she is asked where she is from and answers, “the United States.” From shocked looks to statements of outright disbelief, her body apparently runs counter to a dominant image of what “being” American looks like. While foreign citizens abroad may often “spot” individuals from their own country, they are likely simultaneously employing a hegemonic discourse of embodied nationality.

**Zina:** People just assume we’re South African coloureds so they don’t even...

**Tuli:** They don’t ask us.

Zina and Tuli, sisters from Namibia who have lived in Johannesburg for two years, say they are not “spotted” because they now look like “South African coloureds”. They have perhaps adapted, maybe changed in minute ways, as so they now “fit” within a local discourse of what it means to “look” South African.

#### 7.2.4 “Passing” As South African

By now, I have shown how, through language and embodied performances, both “readers” and the observed reflect their country of origin. Also, this section has used the data from focus groups to explore how language can ostracize and yet connect “foreign” bodies in their new space. However, in the context of xenophobia and fears of xenophobic violence, many participants explained the ways in which they sought to “pass” as South African through their use of language and performance. If language and one’s engagement in a space reveals an individual’s “foreignness”, fears of xenophobia underlie the need for many participants to attempt to remain unseen, to “pass” as a local.

**Wisy:** I was thinking about what you said, how do you like change yourself to adjust to this place. And like for me, I’m- like, when I moved here, I decided to, like, change my, like what clothing I’m going to buy, you know. I decided, like, next year I’m going to buy, like – I don’t know if you guys noticed – but [unclear – Garvelos?]

**Yambi:** Kind of like shoes?

**Wisy:** Yeah. Cause, like, when I came here, most, uh, Cape Townian Xhosa guys or something were, like, wearing them, and I’m, like, that’s legit. And some girls too, you know. Like, OK, I’ll wear that. And I won’t, like, exactly, I won’t, like – it’s not, like, I want be like them, you know, it’s just, like-

**Tessa: Yeah, yeah.**

**Wisy:** I just don’t want to stand out.

In addition:

**Mthabisi:** [...] But then for, for, some of the Zimbabweans, it’s not very hard to adapt to being a South African. Like I, I come from Bulawayo. Like the two ethnic tribes [unclear, a cough], the Ndebele and the Shona. And the Shona’s are there and the Ndebele down here, nearer to the border. So, like, Ndebele and Zulu, there is history with our kings, [unclear], so our language is...

**Tessa: Similar?**

**Mthabisi:** Similar, very similar, so I can always change my accent and talk in Zulu, and I’ll pass for any South African Zulu.

The two examples here demonstrate these coupled techniques employed by the participants to try and “pass” as South African. Wisy, a first-year Namibian man, has noticed a local style of shoes worn by “Cape Townian Xhosa guys”. He wants to buy



these so that he does not “stand out”, he would “pass” as a local instead.

Mthabisi employs a technique of language, adapting his native Ndebele to a South African context where he is indistinguishable from local Zulus. Despite Ndebele being one of the 11 national South African languages, Ndebele perhaps would not “fit it” enough being that it is commonly spoken in Zimbabwe<sup>24</sup>. Instead, he adapts his accent to sound Zulu in order to “pass”.

Many participants also describe the situations in which they have already “passed” through either the use of language or performance. Yambi, a first-year Angolan man, describes a situation during his two years living in Johannesburg in which the police could not initially “spot” him as “foreign”.

**Yambi:** [...] So the cops stop us. They stopped us, and I jumped out, and um, I was fairly comfortable and the guy started speaking in a national language, and I couldn’t understand.

**Tessa: What language?**

**Yambi:** Ah, they were speaking Setho. [...] Um, so then, so I think that if he knew or if, you know, had, have, had then noticed that I was, um, foreigner, they would have approached me first. But then they didn’t. [...] So then the guy asked me for my name, I said, “OK, Yambi.” He says, “Yambi”. He looks at me, “Where you from?” But he asks in, in, in Setho. I said, “Um, sorry?” And, he, he, he asks me in Zulu, “Where you from?” Ah, and then I looked at my friend, and he goes, to the policeman, he goes, “No, he’s not from South Africa. He’s from Angola.” “So, you’re from Angola, sir?” I said, “Yes, sir.” OK, he looks at me, from head to toe and says, “Ah, do you have your papers?”

Again, language is the crux of this performance. As such, Yambi’s lack of knowledge of a national language (either Setho or Zulu) reveals him as a foreign citizen. Yet, he points out, “I think that if he knew, or if, you know, had, have, had then noticed that I was, um, foreigner, they would have approached me first”. Yambi claims the manner in which he performed and/or the perception of the officer coded him as a local South African, indistinguishable from his companions. However, the officer discovered his foreign status through his inability to use language. Here we see the ways in which one can “pass” in

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<sup>24</sup> Of the 11 national languages, Ndebele is the least commonly spoken, with only 1.6% of the population using it at home (Painter, 2010: 43).

performance only to be revealed by language. Again, these interactions all take place within a context of xenophobia, where being a “foreign” body may result in discrimination and violence.

**Wandile:** So it’s like, living here probably, there’s nothing much I can say because they can’t identify me if I’m a South African or a Swazi cause I speak their language.

However, Wandile, a first-year Swazi man, brushes off any fears of xenophobia possibly pitted against him because of his use of SiSwati, a national language of both his native Swaziland and South Africa. Because both countries use SiSwati, Wandile does not believe anyone could distinguish him from a South African. Interesting how both Wandile and Mthabisi speak a national language, yet they differ in how they believe these languages are received in South Africa in relation to their ability to “pass”. While Mthabisi must change his accent to be perceived as Zulu, Wandile does not find that necessary and believes he “passes” regardless.

The focus group comprised of all Namibian students, two of which lived in South Africa for two years, discussed how languages are used to “test” possible foreign citizens in their ability to “pass”.

**Zina:** So if, if, a black person came up to a, if a Zulu person came up a, like, a [unclear] Namibian, they, they, they speak Zulu to them, and they can’t speak Zulu back and then, then...

**Christy:** Then they know you’re not, a foreigner.

**Tuli:** Apparently there was some thing you had to say to prove that you were South African. It was something like ‘elbow’.

**Zina:** Yeah.

**Tuli:** Know what an elbow is-

**Zina:** -Is called-

**Tuli:** -in Zulu.

**Christy:** I don’t know what an elbow is in [unclear, Namibian language?]  
[laughs]

**Ndayola:** But that’s so silly. I can find that out from any Zulu person.

**Zina:** But it’s a big word, so you’ll probably forget it-

**Ndayola:** Ahhh...

**Zina:** And so you need to do the accent properly. And...

Zina and Tuli, using their experience and authority in South Africa to administer and disperse the knowledge they have accumulated, describe how people were “tested” of their knowledge of Zulu in knowing the word “elbow”. Other foreign citizens, including those in this focus group session, may take it as fact themselves, contributing to an escalating anxiety over the question of “passing” as South African and the ramifications of failing such a “test”.

Language and performances are techniques of “passing” as South African in much the same way the participants describe their ability to exclude, connect, and identify foreign citizens. These techniques are regulations of the body in the way that they are constructed rules to categorise bodies into the groups “South African” and “foreign”, and at times, more precisely into countries of origin. The by-product of any such rules and categories and those intending to subvert or disrupt regulations is the possibility of being discovered and those repercussions – xenophobic violence.

### 7.3 Group Identity Abroad

While migration is a highly individualised process, and perhaps an isolating one, immigrants are bound (and develop agency) not only through their subjectivities, but also through their group identities. Within this research study, the participants are university students, students of UCT, black, white, Hindu, international students, Zimbabweans, Angolans, among others. Although living away from their home countries and geographically removed from their previous group identities, the participants place themselves within many group identities in their new terrain.

**Joanne:** It’s.... ahh... People tend to stick to what they know.

Joanne, a first-year Mauritian woman, points to a pattern of individuals seeking out others similar to them, “what they know”. Whether that is through shared subjectivities or appearances<sup>25</sup>, well-ingrained group identities (such as nationality and language), or

<sup>25</sup> In the same focus group as Joanne, Wandile, a first-year Swazi woman, discussed how a fellow student

newly constructed ones (I will point to the ways in which participants see themselves as a group of “new” people in UCT), participants described the ways in which they “stick to what they know”. Inversely, participants also indicate an eagerness to encounter “different” people and engage in the “diversity” they perceive in Cape Town and UCT.

### 7.3.1 Language and Group Identity Construction

As described in the previous section, participants demonstrated the ways in which language can connect them to other individuals from their home countries. Language becomes a powerful means to create a sphere, a group identity, within and separate from the new context. While language constructs this identity, it often serves to recreate the dominant ideologies constructed under a national identity, even one reproduced within a foreign context.

**Kudzai:** The ones [Zimbabweans] that I know still speak as much [Shona] as they did before. I think, at times, it’s interesting to speak in Shona because you can find people that speak your language and have your own conversation with no one else interrupting you cause only you guys understand each other. So at times, it’s comforting to actually speak in Shona because you know you’re speaking to people from your country.

Kudzai, a first-year Zimbabwean woman, discussed the use of Shona for students from Zimbabwe. This comment was made during the pilot focus group, which consisted of three students from Harare, Zimbabwe, who had arrived in Cape Town within the last three weeks. Within that focus group, the participants all agreed that hearing and using Shona in South Africa was a “comforting” feeling. Language became a way to group other Zimbabweans in a sphere of understanding, connecting them to their home while they live abroad.

However, none of the three Zimbabwean participants discussed the use of Ndebele, the second major language spoken in Zimbabwe<sup>26</sup>. Here we see how a construction of the group identity of “Zimbabweans” employs a hegemonic understanding of that identity.

approached her to be her friend because they were both “short and black”.

<sup>26</sup> Credit to Jane Bennett for this observation.

Within this focus group and discussions of Zimbabweans speaking Shona at UCT, an observer would have no sense that another language existed in that country. The participants, in their recreation of a national group identity in their new context through the use of language, have applied a hegemonic ideology of the meaning of Zimbabwe, one that excludes Ndebele speakers from the terrain.

**Joanne:** Like my roommate's Mauritian. [...] Like, we speak French. It's nice, you get to your room, you speak French, it feels like home.

Joanne, a first-year female student, reiterates the feeling of comfort in speaking one's home language in another context. There is an automatic connection between the two individuals, despite many other factors, that inevitably group them together through their shared language. Through a migration across borders, Joanne finds comfort in the ability to "feel like home" in her university residence. While outside of that space, she may have to navigate through a new context, speaking English as her second language; but within her residence and this constructed sphere, French becomes a means to connect and comfort.

On the other hand, Kemi presents a unique situation in which she *does not* share a group identity with those of her country of origin specifically because of language. Similar to the silences in Kudzai's conception of group identity around language, Kemi's example subverts this dominant construction.

**Kemi:** And, I don't really have Namibian friends. I know some Namibians, but they are not really – I'm not close to them. Cause they're Namibian, but we don't speak the same language.

Earlier, Kemi had explained that because her parents were from Nigeria, she had never learned a local language of Namibia. As such, she spoke English and, to some degree of fluency, her parents' home language. As a result, while she shares a similar country of origin with her peers from Namibia, she does not share a language (with the exception of English). This disparity places her outside their sphere of understanding, outside of their constructed group identity, and therefore, she is "not close to them". Again, while

language may serve to connect, it may also serve to exclude. This dual role makes it ill equipped to encompass and provide the same “comfort” to the variety of participants’ experiences. Language may provide a support for some undergoing the anxious process of transition to both university spaces and new social contexts. However, it also seems to reproduce the dominant ideologies of a group identity and the hegemonic construction of the individuals that compose that group, in this case, the nation-state and its citizens. Ndebele-speaking Zimbabweans and students like Kemi become erased from the composition of a group identity around language, marginalised further within their new context.

### **7.3.2 Group Identity Through “Newness” – The University Context**

At the same time, many participants aligned themselves with a particular group – that of the “new” students. Sometimes, participants found both to be salient to their existence in transition (we will see Joanne again in this section). This points to the myriad ways the participants engage in the new space and cope with numerous underlying anxieties, such as living away from former friends, parents, and families, entering into a new educational system, and the previously mentioned worries regarding crime and xenophobia.

**Wisy:** [...] Like, it’s just a new – it’s hard to adjust to a new culture, a new society, but like Rondebosch, Rosebank, the people around there are also new to this place. It’s actually nice. Everyone who moved here is also exploring the place, you know; trying to get to know people, make new friends.

As Wisy, a first-year Namibian man, explains, he is adjusting to this “new culture, a new society”. However, in living in Rondebosch, a neighbourhood popular with students, he is surrounded by others who are also “new” like him. The other new people are also going through the same struggles and adjustments, and there is comfort in the common anxieties, commiserations, and challenges in making friends, that this “new” group engages.

This runs contrary to the previous section in which participants described an enthusiasm

to fit in and the need to “pass” for reasons of safety and social assimilation. Instead of trying to look South African, comfortable and blasé toward the new surroundings, Wisy here describes a complete embrace of the enthusiasm to “explore the place, you know, trying to get to know people,” of being part of a group identity that coalesces around a novelty to the environment. This presents a glaring contradiction in the experiences and testimony of participants, but one makes sense in the context of first-year university students. In simply trying to see what “works” for them, what ways of being make them comfortable and successful in the new terrain, participants ignore the contradictions of their engagement with multiple group identities and their own subjectivities. These contradictions will become more conspicuous in the next section on Seeking Diversity and Difference. Furthermore, many participants earlier expressed a sense of safety and security within the university space. As such, within that space of security, their “newness” and inability to “pass” does not threaten them.

**Prashila:** [...] But everyone, they’ve, generally everyone’s friendly. I mean they have no choice, everyone’s new here, so...

And:

**Joanne:** [...] But that’s nice here. Everyday, like on campus, you meet people, just bumping into someone. “Sorry, where’s that lecture? Oh, you’re going there, too? Yeah, what are you studying? Where are you from?”

Prashila, a first-year Zimbabwean woman, attributes the “friendliness” of people in Cape Town and UCT to their relative newness to the terrain. Joanne, a first-year Mauritian woman, also describes the extreme friendliness of other students at UCT. In all “being new”, participants find a space to ask questions like, “Where is the lecture hall?” without feeling like it places them noticeably as a “new” or “foreign” student. A sense of shared “newness”, with similar pressures and anxieties, provides a unique space for the participants to feel more at ease in their transition.

However, it is pertinent to point out how this is not likely shared by all stories of transition and migration. Instead, it is perhaps a unique feature of a university setting and space, where, every January, thousands of new students do descend onto Rondebosch and

Rosebank to begin their university careers<sup>27</sup>. University spaces provide a unique context for fostering a group identity of “newness”, where the only commonality between those ascribing to such an identity is their ignorance of this space.

Wandile, a first-year Swazi woman, who was in the same focus group as Joanne, describes her entrance to UCT and the pressures of friends to join Swazi Society.

**Wandile:** I think that... I don't know how, but the first thing that happened to me when I came to Cape Town was, I have a friend already who has been here for a year. The first thing she did was like, she was like, “You must join Swazi association, Swazi Society”. And I was like, “No. I don't want to hang out with Swazis. I hang out with Swazis at home. And I know most of the people that are Swazi, I don't want to hang out with them”. And she's like, “But you should. It's the only way you are going to have friends, and fun, you know. You won't survive without Swazi Society,” and things like that. And I didn't join it. And things. Cause I felt like if I did, I would end up hanging out with just Swazis and things like that. So I joined other things like... And even... I just wanted to integrate with everyone.

Perhaps only temporarily, but Wandile rejects offers to join Swazi Society in order to interact and engage “with everyone.” She seeks to reap the benefits of this “new” group identity – meeting “new” and “different” people. Some other participants navigate through these sometimes-opposing groups – between seeking and identifying oneself solely through nationalities or meeting “new” people, people from different contexts and backgrounds. While Wandile sees these two as antithetical, as I described earlier, many participants navigate and negotiate between the two. Wandile explains her perception that Swazi Society is irreconcilable to meeting new people (“I hang out with Swazis at home. And I know most of the people that are Swazi”).

Group identities abroad are formed around a dominant ideology of the home, as I mentioned earlier in this section. While some may contest these ideologies (as I will show in the next section), the perception among many participants remains that aligning oneself exclusively with other students from one's home country results in “missing out.” It is as if groups such as Swazi Society are equivalent to “home” spaces, simply

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<sup>27</sup> Credit to Jane Bennett for this observation.



transplanted to Cape Town, where ideologies, discourses, and ways of being remain the same. Instead, in being a “new” student, the participants construct this new group identity as one of great opportunities.

Wandile (not the same as just previously mentioned), a first-year Swazi man, describes the ideology of the group identity in being “new”:

**Wandile:** The thing is like, there isn’t any, there isn’t any sort of prejudice here. We’re all students. So, we get along. It’s like, “Oh, I’m sorry, I have this problem with this calculation.” “Oh, me, too”. We just get along. “So, oh, I’m from Botswana.” “I’m from Swaziland.” Oh, that’s good, you could tell us things about another country, about culture. Then there’s not a problem, because it’s interesting to see somebody from another place.

In being “new”, students exude a pride and empowerment in their differences. They perceive themselves as without “prejudice”, all willing to meet other students from many other spectrums of life and experience. This description echoes some depictions from my first chapter of findings, where participants described UCT and Cape Town as spaces free of “judgement” and normalising gazes.

Sharing in their inexperience with this new terrain, willingness to meet other students, and the challenges faced in transition, many participants affiliated with this notion of a group identity of “newness”.

### 7.3.3 Seeking Difference and Diversity

The construction of a group identity around being “new” moves well into another common feature from the data – many participants directly expressing an appreciation of Cape Town and UCT’s “diversity” and seeking out these “differences”.

Seeking out those who reflect “diversity” and “difference” is a direct reflection of how participants ascribe their group identity to their countries of origin. As to seek something “different”, the participants must construct what it is that is the “same” to them.

Predominantly, participants sought friends and individuals from different countries. The implication being, in these moments of transition, their paramount group identity remains that of their nationality. In migration, the participants define themselves through a group identity around countries of origin.

**Ndayola:** Like, um, like, most of the people I hang out with now is, like, people from Windhoek.

**Fabian:** Really?

**Ndayola:** And that's all good and whatever, but I mean, I also want to new, know new people and stuff. Um, I don't know if that's Cape Town or that's me or whatever, but that's how it is for me.

And:

**Joanne:** I love it. [All laugh] People from all over the world, like America, Germany. I met someone from Egypt the other day. I'm like, wow, this Egyptian comes to UCT. It's crazy.

Ndayola complains she has not been able to make friends other than from Windhoek, Namibia. Instead, she wants to “know new people and stuff”. Part of the process of “being new” and engaging with other “new” and “foreign” students is the learning of another's home life and culture. Inversely, the participants, in also being “new” and “foreign”, get to share their stories of home, places perhaps seemingly far-off and strange to their new friends. However, the participants do not seem to feel marginalised, but rather highly empowered and unique. The adoption of group identities in being “new” rather allows participants to more openly embrace their subjectivities as foreign citizens. For example, Thabang describes conversations between herself and a new South African friend at university:

**Thabang:** [...] You know, she's really interested about home, and yeah people-

**Tessa:** She's from here?

**Thabang:** Yeah. She's from here.

**Tessa:** Oh, but she's talking about your home?

**Thabang:** Yeah.

**Tessa:** Oh, ok.

**Thabang:** Yeah, Botswana. Like, people really are interested in other countries. Like, “Where are you from?” “Botswana.” “Oh, my goodness! Like, this this this this this this this, you should take me with you, And yeah that that that that that.”

**Tessa:** They all want to come visit?

**Thabang:** They all want to come visit, type of thing.

Perhaps, as a feature of the university context, while students may “all come as one<sup>28</sup>”, they engage and interact with one another through their shared sense of “newness” and “difference”, proudly becoming ambassadors, in a sense, for their home countries. While in the larger social terrain of Cape Town and South Africa, participants may feel it necessary to “pass” as South African; a very unique feature of the university space seems to be the opposite – the prominent adoption of one’s subjectivity as a “foreign” citizen.

**Joanne:** Everyone will be like, ahhh! They’ll be like, “Where are you from?” I say Mauritius, and they’re like, “Oh wow, that’s nice,” and I’m like, “Oh yeah...” [...]

#### 7.3.4 Consensus and Debates and the Meaning of “Home”

Inevitably, in asking participants about differences between their home country and South Africa, many were prompted to explain aspects of their homes. As explained in the previous section, a major characteristic of the transition is the continuous representation of one’s nationality to individuals from South African and other countries. Participants often describe opportunities in their social and university life in which they discursively recreate their “home” in their new environment. The focus group often became another opportunity for them to do so. Furthermore, within focus groups in which all the participants came from the same country (this occurred twice, both unintentionally), discussions of “home” often turned into debates of its meaning and the meaning of other key spaces. First, I will simply present many examples in which participants explain their home and meanings ascribed there. Then, I will include data of how meanings often change and/or come under debate in certain instances.

**Kudzai:** But um... generally in our culture, dating is not a topic you discuss at home with your parents. “Oh mom, I’ve got a boyfriend,” or anything like this. So

<sup>28</sup> **Thabang:** [...] You’ve got so many different people in South Africa. So even when we arrive here, everybody- you can’t really go around and say that you’re from there and you’re from there. I can just say I’m from - you know, so many places people are from, and Limpopo. We all come as one.

usually when people have boyfriends when they're in school, it's kind of like a secret from your parents, unless your parents are very open-minded.

And:

**Prashila:** Normally guys in Zim, they would just look at you, just give you a look and make eye contact, and that's normally the most they would do and then get your number from someone else.

And:

**Yambi:** There's a culture you know in Luanda. Um, there are different criminals for different types of people. For example, us, um, students, we may be targeted by gang members. And these gang members you know, they don't come and um, um, you know grab your stuff and run away. Like, they've got like methods. They're really, really, really clever. Um, for example, if we, if we um, if we were just walking around, this guy comes to us. They literally walk in groups, five, group of five say, he comes to us and he starts talking to us, as if we were friends. And then, suddenly you, suddenly the guy just changes. If he's all smooth, he suddenly becomes aggressive. And tells you "Hey, just don't react. You are surrounded. This is what you have. This is what you do." And then they leave.

Kudzai and Prashila were both first-year Zimbabwean women who, in coming to UCT, had made their first visit to South Africa. Yambi, a first-year Angolan man, had lived in Johannesburg for two years for high school. While the participants discuss vastly different topics (dating and crime, respectively), all three use their knowledge of their home country to represent it within this new space. Experiential knowledge of the home becomes a way in which participants become an authority on their country within the university space. As described earlier, the eagerness to meet "new" and "different" people through a common "newness" creates a system in which students use their knowledge of a "home" and represent that space for others. In doing so, they adopt a position of power and authority through this knowledge over a terrain unknown to their listeners. In meeting others from vastly different countries and context, these participants set themselves up as a sort of resident "expert" on Zimbabwe and Angola, for example. Perhaps this fervour to meet people not from their "homes" is a way for students to both learn about other contexts, and become a "teacher" on the subject of their own countries and cultures.

Interestingly, meanings from the home often change in the transition. For example, the following two participants discuss the use of Shona in Zimbabwe and at UCT. Both speakers are first-year students from Harare, Zimbabwe.

**Kudzai:** People are talking about other people cause they can't hear our language then... Well, like I could sit with Dorothy and, I don't know, talk about you. And because you can hear what we're saying, we could talk about you from here to Clarinus.

**Dorothy:** And he will be Zimbabwean and he'll just know that these two Zimbabweans, "Listen to them!" [Laughs]

**Kudzai:** And we'll know he's Zimbabwean cause he'll laugh at something we're saying, something like that. And we'll just have a conversation in Shona, cause it's so nice to find someone who is speaking your language. But I think, for me, the school that I went to was a group A school. And some of the people I learned with, they came from upper-class families and to be able to speak Shona is unsophisticated.

Kudzai describes the process I explained in an earlier section – how students use language to create a common sphere of understanding and familiarity within “foreign” spaces. However, while speaking Shona at UCT pulls one into this group identity, Shona has a very different meaning in Zimbabwe. If one speaks Shona, one is unsophisticated, ignorant, uneducated. The meaning of Shona itself undergoes a transformation for the participants as they endure this transition to a foreign space. Instead of Shona being “forsaken”<sup>29</sup>, it becomes a means through which Shona-speaking Zimbabweans connect to one another and to their common home, a marker of their group identity.

However, Mthabisi, an Ndebele-speaking Zimbabwean man, also presents within the focus group a different meaning of Shona in South Africa – an audacious marker of being “foreign”.

**Mthabisi:** Yeah, they don't mind, whatever it is. Even in the library, they'll speak in Shona, wherever they'll speak in Shona. I admire those guys. I admire their confidence.

[Some laughs in the focus group]

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<sup>29</sup> **Patrick:** In Zimbabwe, it's only now that they speak in Shona. But the way they do it ... Maybe they do it too uh... ethnically. I don't know. It just doesn't seem as nice or something. I don't know. People try and, like, forsake Shona.

**Mthabisi:** Yeah, but I guess for some of us here, we just have to change the accent. But the Shona guys, they really don't mind. I admire it. Even during the xenophobia, some of them are walking and shouting in Shona. It was quite dangerous-

Mthabisi also notes the use of Shona in public spaces. However, he perceives it not as a sphere of understanding and a way to include only fellow Shona-speakers, but as a reckless endeavour for Zimbabweans often targeted for being "foreign" in South Africa. Instead of Shona being "unsophisticated" (as in Zimbabwe) or "cool" (at a university abroad with other Zimbabweans), Shona is "dangerous" – it is a flagrant act announcing one's "foreign" status in a context of xenophobic violence.

Focus groups with students all from the same country seemed to provide a better opportunity for participants to engage in recreating their "home", reconstructing meanings, and debating others. Unintentionally, two focus groups contained such a homogeneity – the previously mentioned one with three Zimbabweans, and a group with six participants from Windhoek, Namibia.

**Ndayola:** I think it actually depends where, which environment you're in, like, cause, cause I, my, like our school and also like Delta, they're very-

**Fabian:** But you went to like posh schools, so you can't really-

**Ndayola:** It wasn't, it's not posh!

**Christy:** Not posh.

**Ndayola:** It wasn't posh!

**Fabian:** St. Paul's is like the poshest school.

**Ndayola:** But like Delta high? Delta-

**Christy:** Is Delta posh?

**Ndayola:** Delta is not posh, bro.

**Fabian and Zina:** Delta is very posh!

**Fabian:** It's way posher than-

**Zina:** Like Academia, was just-

The participants had been discussing the issue of inter-racial dating and friendships in their high schools in Windhoek. Ndayola contested Fabian's assertion that very, very few high school students even spoke between racial categories. As such, they began fiercely debating whether certain high schools were "posh" or not. And later:

**Tessa:** Well, what are the different rules, though?

**Sophie:** Well, why is it a double standard?

**Fabian:** Posh private school.

**Ndayola:** Yeah, why should different rules apply?

**Fabian:** Where it's more, um, Western.

[Some laughter I think from Sophie]

**Ndayola:** No, that's true, no, no that's true.

**Tuli:** Yeah, that's very true.

**Fabian:** They were English and Western. Whereas we were at the public schools, which were more average. Where it's more, um, you can, like, judge more how the Namibian society is.

In a foreign country, the participants from Namibia debate whether or not a certain school was “posh”, yet agree that the high school in question was more “Western” and, therefore, not an environment representative of Namibia. Perhaps living in a foreign country, firstly, provides a space for people to debate these meanings, markers, and categories. Not only are they afforded a position of authority and given the power and a voice to recreate their home country through their particular perspective; yet they also may question certain meanings and symbols, debate the “posh-ness” of a high school. For Ndayola, perhaps she does not want to represent herself as a woman who attended a “posh private school”. As such, being in homogenous social groups of a shared nationality also requires participants to abdicate some of their authority, their own representation of “home”, to the perspectives of the group.

For the participants, living in a foreign country generated a space for them to represent and recreate the “home”. In doing so, they may engage in a process of changing or challenging the meanings, symbols, and discourses that perhaps dominate their former spheres. Within homogenous social groups, a space also exists for meanings of the home to undergo debate, where an individual's perspective and voice is at times questioned and their authority is quelled.

## 8. Conclusion

The essential focus of this study is the meaning of being a “foreign” body in the social and historical context of Cape Town, South Africa and the university space. What developed is two-fold and embedded in the semiotic meaning of the “foreign”. As Saunders (2003) describes, in invoking the “foreign”, one is implicitly questioning both the “body that does not belong” and what belonging means through an interrogation of a “home.” The participants engaged in this entangled, two-fold process – both reconstructing their “home” and its meanings, bringing this forth within their new context, embodying and/or recognizing the dominant notions of their former “homes”; and, at the same time, contending with new meanings following their migration, re-establishing themselves and their subjectivities into a new hierarchy of meanings, assuming agency in the reception, creation, and adoption of new knowledges of this context. As they recreate their selves, bodies within South Africa, they re-imagine their former “homes” as cradles of this “self”; “... a place one can leave, but not something one can leave behind” (Saunders, 2003: 21).

In this conclusion, I will attempt to address numerous points of discussion and debate in an order reflecting the chapters of this thesis – feeling “free”, discourses around fear of crime, and the meaning of embodying a “foreign” body in Cape Town. However, as I have noted previously, these borders are false creations of my own rendering, useful for organisation and fluidity in this research, but ultimately impossible to maintain. As such, these boundaries will bleed into one another in this chapter, in perhaps my own feminist nod to complicated and leaky borders and the subversion of categories.

Firstly, in the creation of a category entitled “Feeling ‘Free’”, I initially noted its own misnomer. As mentioned previously, one is never “beyond” or “outside” the systems of power, as Butler (1990) contends. Foucault points to the modern “demand for sexual liberation freedom” (1978: 6) in the face of old taboos as naïve to the productive nature of power distributed through this constant sexual discourse. Even within a context in which one *feels* “free” and liberated, discourses and meanings embedded within still exist



to construct hierarchies of power.

However, Foucault does point to the feeling one gets in their belief they are moving “outside” this realm: “A person who holds force in such language places himself to a certain extent outside the reach of power; he upsets established law; he somehow anticipates the coming freedom” (1978: 6). While Foucault is specifically referring to people who “speak the truth” about sex and sexuality in the face of taboos, he hints at the sense of freedom experienced when moving outside seemingly established restrictions and regulations. As a result, although one is never “outside” or “free” of established regimes of power, these participants feel they are so.

However, invoking Foucault through an examination of body regulation risks repeating the fallacy that the body is a site of cultural and discursive domination, and not as a subject, an actor, in its own right. Foucault’s depictions of bodies within a regulated, disciplinary system, robs the individual of their agency, asserting cultural determinism instead of biological (see, Butler, 1990; Csordas, 1994; Sawicki, 1996; Haber, 1996). Within this research, however, the participants themselves re-create the meaning of home through language that does often reflect Foucault’s depiction of a disciplinary system regulating bodies as objects. Yet, ultimately, I would argue that their position “outside” this disciplinary space – critiquing their homes from South Africa - positions them as agents and actors.

In surprising similarity to their discourses of insecurity, fear of crime, and xenophobic violence in South Africa, the “home” is a place of, at times, shocking violence, restrictions, and discipline exacted against marginalised bodies. For example, in several focus groups participants noted punishment meted against nonconforming bodies (who rebel in forms of dress, in particular) through social exclusion and rejection of those individuals as “crazy” or in need of psychiatric care. These descriptions also correspond with Foucault’s (1977) contention that certain institutions – legal, psychiatric, medical, in particular – are used to physically separate deviance from larger social spaces. He argues that punishment was enacting in the removal from public spaces, leaving “everyday

perception” (1977: 9).

Within these depictions of the “home”, Foucault’s arguments on the methods, techniques, and power relations come forth. Participants clearly invoked, “the faceless gaze [with] thousands of eyes posted everywhere,” (1977: 213) of the Panopticon that render every individual’s precise movements to a series of normalising judgements and surveillance. Even the terminology of being “put into a box” reflects his description of the disciplinary society, where people are individualized and hierarchised through a system.

But where are these participants? The group interviews and our interaction, their bodily location as they re-imagine their home, take place in Cape Town. Their transition and migration itself reveals to the participants this system of discipline and hierarchies at home. In noting *differences*, the body regulations of a former location become apparent; they observe, and perhaps engage with, a multitude of meanings and expressions of respectability. Instead, the participants depictions of feeling “free” from their former “homophobic” and “small” countries of origin is perhaps not so much a sense of diminished regulations of the body, but an awareness of increasingly liberal meanings of respectability and its acceptable performances, especially within the university context.

In considering these findings, it is important to qualify them within the context of the university. As students, and very new students, their predominant interaction with the South African context and spaces within Cape Town, more specifically, has been through their identities as students and within the limited sphere of UCT. Many participants noted seeing Cape Town only through the Peninsula Tour offered to new and international students and organised by IAPO. In discussions of dress, styles, and markers of performance, they are often discussing other students they watch while sitting on the steps of Jameson Plaza. As such, while I am by no means questioning their experiences and interpretations, I do wish to qualify them through pointing out their somewhat limited interactions with the city at large. As a result, within this university context, one would encounter a medley of interpretations and meanings of respectability. With students from Cape Town to Polokwane, Kenya to Egypt, Norway to the United Kingdom, participants

would undoubtedly confront an assortment of discussions, debates, and presentations of respectability perhaps not afforded within their own home countries and contexts, *or* even not afforded within the larger city of Cape Town or South Africa.

The participants' abilities to re-create meanings – in their comments, critiques, and depictions – demonstrate their agency and subversion of disciplinary forces from home. Their resistance is located within their privilege – the participants, through their transition, have an opportunity not easily afforded to those who remain at home. The location of transition provides a space for discursive resistance - critique of the expectations - of home and its context-specific disciplinary system. In these confrontations of meanings to respectability, the “home” becomes a space discursively debated, reconstructed, and understood within a new context. For implicit within the meaning of “foreign” is the oppositional relationship to a “home”, a place “not simply removed, but constantly re-imagined” (Redfield and Tomášková, cited in Saunders, 2003: 22). As such, culture does not become a determining factor; the participants demonstrate their resistance in a critique of this culture, and agency in a new “freedom” to experiment with ways of being.

The interconnectedness between a re-imagined home and the self in a new context can be explicitly seen in what I termed *embodied nationality*, the expression of meanings, signifiers, symbols, languages, that both mark the individual as “foreign” and connect this individual to others from a shared home within a context abroad. This embodied nationality arises from, what Saunders (2003) describes as the mythology of the nation as a family, a citizenship, and belonging through blood and place, and unity through shared contexts and institutions, symbols, history, and language. Underlying this mythology for the foreigner is a sense “that one bears a particular and irreversible relationship to a place of origin, that where one comes from is where one belongs” (Saunders, 2003: 23). I am not contending, as Csordas (1994) describes as, an account of the body as a pre-cultural site, where that culture is inscribed. Instead, bodies come into being through and amid a culture that marks, yanks, and stares at bodies. Through these struggles, resistances, and experiences, cultural markers and ways of being emerge in a specific historical and social

location; the body, within this limited set, negotiates through.

In this research study, the embodied nationality of students served to both mark them as “foreign” in their new context and connect them with others from the same country. Participants remarked on the different ways in which they could “spot” someone from their home country, and create a sphere of understanding through language in which they shared a group identity from that country of origin. As such, the re-establishment of the self while abroad is directly connected to one’s construction and understanding of that context called “home”.

However, in these constructions, identifying marks of embodied nationality, and group identities, we see the reproduction of *dominant* meanings (and dominant disciplines) of the former nation and its inhabitants. For in the creation of social group identities, “To secure loyalty, groups must not only satisfy members’ needs for affiliation and belonging *within* the group, they must also maintain clear boundaries that differentiate them from other groups” (Brewer, 1991: 478). Just as the “foreign” invites the questions of, “Who belongs?”, the creation of group identities abroad around an a re-imagined “home” and the embodied characteristics of that nation provide a terrain for hegemonic constructions of the nation and its citizens to dominate. Does the question of, “Who belongs?” become a signifier of a group identity abroad? Which bodies come to be marked clearly, recognizably as citizens of a particular nation? Would a young Indian woman from Zimbabwe be recognised as a Zimbabwean and come to align herself with the group identity abroad, if it is constantly created through the use of Shona, a language she perhaps does not speak at home? As such, the group identity abroad, and its accompanying concepts of the nation, re-marginalises certain bodies. For example, in the focus group composed of three Zimbabwean participants, they note the use of Shona in providing a common sphere of understanding and a group identity abroad, neglecting to note the common use of Ndebele in Zimbabwe. Group divisions, identities, the hegemonic notions of the nation and its people seem to be reproduced within a foreign context.

Furthermore, despite acting as agents in their recreation of the home in often denouncing such regulation, participants embody this culture and nation through their re-enactment of disciplinary techniques. For example, many participants note how the performance and increasing liberal meanings of respectability within this space shocks them. They stop. They comment. They stare. This brings forth their embodied nationalities – their markers and performance of a culture and nation – to their new space through their enactment of disciplinary techniques and normalising judgements. The target of these disciplines are rebellious bodies, those “who fall on the wrong side of the normalising process” (Young, 2005: 19) of the participants *home*, not within this new space.

Underlying the concept of embodying the “foreign” in South Africa is a deep-seated fear - fear of crime, from muggings to murders, and fear of xenophobia, ranging from being treated differently to violent attacks. The fear and insecurity further destabilised participants’ efforts to re-establish themselves and their “self” within the context of South Africa. In fact, it seems the entire process to re-establish the self within this context is negotiated through insecurity. As such, many participants noted an eagerness and desire to “pass” as South African through language, dress, and performance in order to slip unseen into the terrain. Spurred on by this fear (of crime, xenophobic attacks), participants attempt to mitigate their embodied nationality through the performance of “acting” South African. Their attempt to do so both points to the constructedness of these performances and the meanings of a South African performance they learn within this space. As such, in a similar paradigm as with group identities around dominant meanings of culture, I would surmise that the participants perform “South African” in the dominant displays of this embodied nationality. Taking into account their limited time in this context and their desire to feel safe, I believe that the participants would echo the hegemonic performances of South African. In being dominant, perhaps they would provide the greatest capital (Bourdieu, 1990), be “acceptable” within new normalising judgments, be easiest to perceive, and provide the greatest promise of safety.

However, in further attempts to surmount these seemingly overwhelming anxieties, participants also engage in a process of knowledge-building - gathering information

through various sources and personal experiences on the nature, virulence, and spatiality of violence and crime. Their conversations follow what Foucault refers to as “instances of discursive production... of the production of power... of the propagation of knowledge (1978: 12).

Through this knowledge building, participants undertake a labelling of certain spaces along a spectrum of “dangerous” and “safe” in regards to their feelings of fear and vulnerability to crime. Coming from theoretical spaces of queer theory and feminist geography, I perceived this navigation and labelling of spaces reflective of the process of ascribing ideologies of sexuality to the public street and other semi-public spaces. For instance, the research of Bell, Binnie, Cream and Valentine (1994) focuses on the ways in which “lipstick lesbians” and “gay skinheads” perhaps disrupt the heterosexual street. But an interesting point derived from their work is not only how subjectivities arise through construction, performance, and in relations to others, but also how ideologies of spaces themselves are produced through interactions with the subjectivities of those who inhabit them. Therefore, an aspect of the knowledges that participants acquire is the relative safety of certain spaces in regards to their own subjectivities, especially their “foreignness”.

Jaggar describes a similar process in a depiction of the construction of emotions:

If someone is unafraid in a situation generally perceived as dangerous, her lack of fear requires further explanation; conversely, if someone is afraid without evident danger, then her fear demands explanation; and, if no danger can be identified, her fear is denounced as irrational or pathological. Thus, every emotion presupposes an evaluation of some aspect of the environment while, conversely, every evaluation or appraisal of the situation implies that those who share that evaluation will share... a predictable emotional response to the situation (Jaggar, 1989: 153).

Thus, the accumulation and disbursal of knowledge in regards to “safe” and “dangerous” places becomes a process of understanding a shared ideology and evaluation of space and perpetuating this ideology onto others.

While their subjectivities as foreign citizens bore all the participants constructions of “safe” and “dangerous” spaces, female participants reproduced constructions of femininity through their perceived inevitable victim hood – discursively, they placed themselves as the victims of inescapable crime. Assault, for women, is viewed as “inevitable... which women can only protect themselves against rather than challenge” (Pain, 2000, citing Hamner, 1978). However, as both male and female participants noted and discussed crime often and commented on their fear of violence and assault, it seems perhaps not that men are invulnerable to crime. Instead, in adopting dominant constructions of femininity, women have more access to report feelings of vulnerability and fear. As Hollander hypothesizes, gender expectations may, “... lead women to exaggerate their fear of violence in both everyday interaction and in survey responses, while it may lead men to minimize fear: To appear appropriately feminine or masculine, individuals must meet gender expectations regarding vulnerability” (2001: 85). Jaggar echoes this assertion, as women “are permitted and even required to express emotion more openly” (1989: 157).

While participants of all genders engaged in a process of knowledge-dissemination, this was more acutely apparent in the discourses of the men. The process began even before the participants left for UCT, as they learned about the South African crime sphere through news, family, and friends. Upon arrival and in this transitional moment, participants continued this education of crime and its spatiality, especially in its relation to their own subjectivity. It seems, through interviews with participants who had been in South Africa for up to two years, that this is an ongoing process, but one whereby participants, these foreign residents, come to positions of authority and power through their panoptic understanding of crime. It is the myth of the “dispassionate investigator” (Jaggar, 1989: 158), a masculinist tactic that uses reason and knowledge to bolster one’s authority, especially in contrast to discourses of emotion. The *purpose* of this knowledge is to mitigate and subvert the emotion of fear; for example, a person’s fear that is incongruent with an accepted ideology of a space is viewed as “irrational” and “paranoid”.

Furthermore, I must consider these results in the larger field of implications for feminist epistemology, migration, and embodiment research. As such, I would like to analyse and critique my research methods and point to possibilities for future engagements with similar research topics.

Firstly, while I believe the use of focus groups was extremely beneficial for this work, I ultimately would have liked to pair it with more ethnographic methods. Focus groups, or group interviews, provided a considerable amount of data to examine both participants reported behaviours and their discourses in relations to their peers. Within the space, they also provided an opportunity for participants to express and validate one another's experiences, an especially helpful attribute of group interviews in light of the anxieties and difficulties in transition. However, I remain curious about what data would have become known through ethnographic methods, such as participant observation, with a handful of participants. Through this method, I believe I could have cultivated and tracked such data over a period, unearthed how the participants *navigate* these processes I have described over a period of several months. Such a method would point to day-to-day cultivations of agency, challenges, and negotiations of subjectivities, spaces, and changing conceptions of their own "foreign bodies". Furthermore, it would expose how these negotiations and conceptions change over time through their increasing integration and interaction with the South African field.

While this would not fit within the scope and resources of this research, for a future endeavour, I would also consider encouraging writing on the part of the participants themselves. Perhaps for an interested few who have the ability and time to dedicate to this task, asking participants to engage in daily diaries of their experiences as "foreign bodies" and their negotiation of spaces. For example, most research into women's fear of crime (as well as this project) highlights their lifestyle changes and how these impeded freedom and mobility. I believe through mobility diaries studies could point to daily negotiations, conceptions of space, and how these change, thus calling attention to the micro instances of agency and negotiations of power within these situations. Such a method would further encourage a multiplicity of women's voices, diminish my own



power in representations, and impede a totalising and homogenizing depiction of women. Perhaps this would also address a fraction of Nagar's (2003) call to amend radically methodologies and collaborations with subjects of research, unearthing methods that would attend the problems and concerns of these subjects and not those of the Northern researcher.

Again, considering the aims and methods of feminist epistemology, I would like to address the role of positionality throughout this research process. As my research interests and political goals coalesce around a feminist perspective, I made a deliberate effort in highlighting the myriad ways in which gender was implicated within the findings. Furthermore, I found a familiarity within the findings. In my own transition to university (a move within Texas in the U.S.), I too engaged in discourses referring to my home as "homophobic" in comparison with the university space and the city of Austin. As a new international student at UCT, I was also incited to learn and dispense knowledges regard the spatialisation of crime; I also do not walk alone in Observatory at night. In addition, I came to understand my own privilege – while I am "foreign" within this space, my whiteness diminishes its impact on my feelings of safety and security and the urgency to "pass". As described by the participants, being a black foreign body creates this sense of fear and insecurity because of that "foreignness" – this is not an experience I share.

The findings also point to a possibly problematic trend – the recreation of this "big city Mecca" of liberalism, freedom, and liberated performances. Consider the implications of Sthabile and Prashila's depiction of Cape Town:

**Sthabile:** Yeah, I think, um, it kind of makes you aware when people talk a lot...

**Prashila:** -talk about it.

**Sthabile:** Like, if I were in say San Francisco now, I would be looking for.... well, you know. But, um, yeah, there are always gay people everywhere.

**Tessa: Yeah, yeah.**

**Sthabile:** Yeah, so it's not much different, but the fact that they are naming it that you would-

**Prashila:** Keep a lookout.

**Sthabile:** Yeah, keep a lookout.

In moving to South Africa and Cape Town, in particular, many participants reiterated that this space was “free”, derided their homes as “small”, “homophobic”. Cape Town was a space where “there are always gay people everywhere,” where performances of marginalised sexualities exist without fear of discipline. The reputation reproduced within the findings is the narrative of the “big city”, where oppressed bodies can flock for safety away from their discriminating homes. What is problematic within these narratives is that it both homogenizes and totalises the discourses around these “home” spaces (be them rural or simply outside the university sphere), negating the presence and existence of resistance within the “home” against such powers and curtailing their very possibility. Instead of complying with such narratives, further feminist research should seek out the locations and bodies of resistance within these “homes” rather than reiterate the totalising perception that such resistance does not exist, or, is always and decisively met with violence within a society. Where are sights of resistance within Windhoek, for example, which these participants dismiss as homogenous?

Furthermore, in contrasting the “homophobic home” with “free” Cape Town and, to a lesser degree, South Africa as a whole, these narratives erase the existence of violence and discipline against marginalised bodies here. Again, these contrasting images provide a totalising perception of these spaces, negating the variety of ideologies within them, and the presence of both resistances and oppression.

Additionally, I believe that the findings point to an overwhelming sense of fear – from personal crime to embodying the “foreign” – that underlies experiences of transition and migration. As the global phenomenon of such movement increasingly continues (Adepoju, 2003; Saunders, 2003), I believe it is important to consider what causes these feelings, how individuals mitigate and resist such powers, and what institutions and researchers can do to better provide a space of security. We have seen within this study how these participants experience and alleviate some senses of fear and insecurity. However, what are the further implications of being a “foreign body” nested within their underlying anxieties? I do not wish, as Palmary (2006) critiques, to homogenise the

experience of migrations and foreign bodies through a totalising assumption of their fears. However, this research does point to insecurities that correlate with one inhabiting a “foreign” body. Rather than blending the variety of experiences to assume this fear, further research to investigate the textures, nature, and the heterogeneity of experiences that provide a range of fear and insecurity in migration.

Parrini (2007) points to the increased risks of HIV/AIDS and other STDs in the embodied sexuality of migrants in the United States arising in part because of their underlying fear, mistrust, and confusion of institutions, such as medical systems, that could prevent or treat such diseases. As such, questions arise as to how social research implicating the body in migration may point to other problems in accessing social, legal, medical and judicial institutions that stem from a concern and insecurity of the body. As subjectivities and “coordinates” (Parrini, 2007) are reconstituted within the new context and, in addition, those migrating must also adjust to their new identities as “foreign”, public services, such as healthcare and legal services, may fail to accommodate the experiences and needs of these individuals. In light of these reports of overwhelming fear and a sense of heightened insecurity of xenophobic attacks, an individual must have access to services, such as police and legal systems, in order to be afforded their full rights.

However, this research does point to avenue for knowledge distribution to increase access to public services. As the section on insecurity and fear of crime showed, those in transition gather understanding and knowledge of the ideology of spaces and their new terrain through a network of peers and family. Furthermore, many also constituted themselves through group identities of their former “homes” through languages. Through these informal networks, institutions seeking to serve these marginalised populations may navigate these canals and networks of communities. Within my own experience, accessing medical care in South Korea, where I did not speak the language, was a challenge I navigated through discussions with other English-speaking foreign friends. I was able to access care through international healthcare clinics that incorporated an English-speaking staff.

As the ever-increasing phenomena of migration continues globally, either internationally or within the nation-state, further research should consider the contradictions of the body and its experiences as a space of agency and a source of fear and anxiety.

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## Appendix i

### Glossary

Alexandra – “Township” in Gauteng province near Johannesburg with roughly half a million people. Noted in press accounts as one of the site of xenophobic violence during the 2008 attacks.

Blue Safe Walk Route – Walk Route from Upper to Lower Campuses that is surveyed by CCTV and contains nine emergency markers. Route is marked on Appendix ii and iii.

Jameson Plaza – Central area for UCT student life; often filled with students during lunch or class break. See Appendix ii, D6.

Joburg – Johannesburg, largest South African city.

International Academic Programmes Office (IAPO) – UCT office charged with handling all “internationalisation” at UCT, including foreign students attending the university and having UCT students attend foreign campuses. See Appendix iii, K4.

*Kwerekwere* – Considered an obscene slur for foreigners.

Ndebele – Language predominantly spoken in Zimbabwe, native to people of the same name. Also, one of the 11 national languages of South Africa.

Observatory – Neighbourhood near university with several student houses. Also, it is the location of two recent student murders.

Res – Residence halls. At UCT, this is a three-tiered system, with most first-year undergraduates under 21 years living in first-tier housing, which offers a food plan. There are 14 residence halls for first-year students. Not all incoming first-years are offered student residences, and all students must apply for campus accommodation.

Rondebosch – Neighbourhood near university with several student houses and flats.

Township – Historically demarcated area for displaced people during apartheid area, generally defined by one non-“White” coloured group. Today, townships remain largely defined by their historical race and class parameters.

Shona – Language predominantly spoken in Zimbabwe, native to people of the same name.

Southern African Development Community (SADC) – Inter-governmental organisation comprising 15 Southern African countries, including Angola, Botswana (where it is headquartered), Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Students from the region may attend UCT at the same cost as local students.

Such students comprised almost 10% of the total student population at UCT.

Xenophobia – Fear or antipathy toward foreigners.

Xhosa – or IsiXhosa, language spoken by people of the same name.

Zulu – or IsiZulu, language spoken by people of the same name. The language spoken most in South African homes, and one of the 11 national languages.

Appendix ii and iii are below.

These are maps of the UCT Upper, Middle, and Lower Campus to aid an understanding of the area in which participants often refer.

*Source:* University of Cape Town, Available at: [www.uct.ac.za/contact/campus/](http://www.uct.ac.za/contact/campus/)

University of Cape Town





